Egalitarian Behavior and Reverse Dominance Hierarchy [and Comments and Reply]

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Egalitarian Behavior and Reverse Dominance Hierarchy[1]

by Christopher Boehm

Egalitarian society is "explained" chiefly in terms of ecological or social factors that are self-organizing. However, egalitarian behavior is found in a wide variety of social and ecological settings, and the indications are that such societies are deliberately shaped by their members. This paper looks to egalitarian behavior as an instance of domination of leaders by their own followers, who are guided by an ethos that disapproves of hierarchical behavior in general and of bossiness in leaders in particular. A substantial cross-cultural survey reveals the specific mechanisms by which the political rank and file creates a reverse dominance hierarchy, an anomalous social arrangement which has important implications for cross-phylogenetic comparisons and for the theory of state formation.

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1. The research project was conceived in 1980–81, and I thank the National Endowment for the Humanities for a 1981 summer fellowship to study intentional components of moral and political evolution and the H. F. Guggenheim Foundation for a major grant (1981–82) that made possible a semester's intensive research and data analysis on egalitarian society. Useful comments on a previous draft were received from Paul J. Bohannan, Donald E. Brown, and Bruce M. Knauft and from referees for the *American Anthropologist*. The detailed criticisms of referees for CURRENT ANTHROPOLOGY were very helpful. This paper was awarded the Stirling Prize in Psychological Anthropology in December 1992.

After decades of intensive discussion and field study, egalitarian societies remain something of an ethnological mystery. For one thing, various "materialistic" causal explanations based on environmental, economic, demographic, or social-structural factors have been offered for particular egalitarian societies or types, yet no single general theory seems to explain egalitarian behavior in all of its forms. For another, from the standpoint of phylogeny an egalitarian mode of political life confronts us with an apparent anomaly (see Boehm 1984, 1991; Knauft 1991). The African great apes with which we share an ancestor have marked social dominance hierarchies with authoritative leadership, and so do humans living in chiefdoms, kingdoms, and states. Why is it, then, that humans dwelling in traditional societies of small scale, in locally autonomous communities of a few dozen to a few hundred persons, appear to live essentially as political equals? My intention is to resolve the first question by explaining egalitarian behavior on the basis of a single hypothesis that is both political and psychological. In doing so, I shall demonstrate that egalitarian communities are not so unlike those of other humans (and of the African great apes) as has been assumed in the extensive literature on "egalitarian society."

Earlier Explanations of Sociopolitical Leveling

"Egalitarian society" has become one of anthropology's best-known sociopolitical types (see Fortes and Evans-Pritchard 1940; Middleton and Tait 1958; Service 1962, 1975; Fried 1967). The central idea has been that in such societies political leadership is weak and ranking and stratification among adult males are absent or muted (see also Flanagan and Rayner 1988, Knauft 1991). For scholars focusing on political evolution and on state origins in particular, this "type" in a sense was an expedient invention, providing a baseline for diachronic analysis (see Mitchell 1978, Schneider 1979, Cashdan 1980). Thus, "egalitarian society" was originally defined chiefly in terms of what was known about the small-scale nomadic foraging societies that so obviously contrasted with centralized polities. An important point agreed upon early on was that a readily recognized air of "equality" prevailed among adult males and at best leaders had little authority or economic advantage.

In explaining egalitarian society, Fried (1967:34) stressed "leveling mechanisms," in particular ones that might be called *automatic:* external factors that were likely to inhibit hierarchy and that operated independently of people's intentions. His early focus was on hunting bands, and he explained leveling in terms of the exigencies of a nomadic life in which a highly cooperative small group was unable to accumulate much material wealth. Over several decades, other societal types were recognized as exhibiting similar political patterns and were similarly explained in terms of local environmental, economic, demographic, and social-structural features. Analyses of individual egalitarian societies or

specific subtypes ranging from nomadic foragers to sedentary horticulturalists have produced an impressive list of automatic leveling mechanisms. This list applies (1) to *nomadic hunter-gatherers* (see Gluckman [1965:4–5] on nonspecialized economic production; Cashdan [1980:116] and Slobodin [1969:194] on how nomadic subsistence limits material accumulation; Salzman [1979] on effects of scattered and unpredictable resources; Layton [1986:24–28] on dispersed food supply and territorial behavior; Fried [1967:33–34] and Woodburn [1982:440] on uncentralized redistribution systems for large-game meat; Sharp [1958:5–6] and Tonkinson [1988:151] on complex ego-based dominance-submission networks that prevent the emergence of hierarchy at the group level; Turnbull [1965*a*:228] on constantly changing band composition and its negative effect on the development of authority and control; and, among recently sedentarized foragers, Knauft [1987:466, 477] on witchcraft-type killing as a sanction that facilitates an equitable distribution of females); (2) to *horticulturalists* (see Forge [1972:533–34] and Mitchell [1978:9] on competitive redistributive systems based on exchange; Godelier [1982:4] on unavoidable cyclicity in "big-man" careers; and Mitchell [1988] on leveling effects of gambling); and (3) to *pastoralists* (see Schneider [1979] and Black [1972:621] on the economic vagaries of cattle-holding; Burnham [1979] on the leveling effects of nomadism and flexible local groups; and Kluckhohn [1966] on the leveling effect of witchcraft accusations).

The causal assumptions here seem logical and the leveling effects potentially powerful, but none of these mechanisms provides the basis for a *general* theory of leveling in traditional societies of small scale—"bands" and "tribes." Not all or even most egalitarian people are foragers or even nomads. Nor, obviously, are they all gamblers or involved in "big-man" trading competition or pastoralists; nor is their group composition always dynamic. Aside from being by definition less politically centralized and less socially stratified than people who live in chiefdoms, the main thing they seem to share is that their local groups are relatively small and they have egalitarian ideologies; but none of the arguments makes small size or an egalitarian ethos causally responsible for egalitarian society. Thus, over several decades of study, anthropologists have developed no unified theory for explaining egalitarian behavior.

Intentional Leveling

Writing about the !Kung more than a decade ago, Lee (1979:457–61) ascribed causal importance to a previously neglected leveling mechanism, namely, the strong tendency of followers to restrict the development of personal ascendancy among adult males, including leaders. Howe's (1979) work on the sedentary modernizing Cuna suggested something rather similar. Several years later two attempts were made to generalize in the same direction. In one of these, discussing subsistence, Woodburn (1982) examined three African hunter-gatherer societies and suggested that their egalitarian political styles were attributable to the people's intentions (see also Ingold 1987:222–42; Woodburn 1988). In the other, in an evolutionary context I likewise emphasized the causal role of intentions (see Boehm 1982*b*), suggesting that egalitarian political styles developed only after the emergence of the human capacity for purposeful, moralistic sanctioning (see also Boehm 1984, 1986*a*, 1991). My general evolutionary interpretation was based on extant egalitarian societies and was not limited to foragers, and in a sense it reinterpreted "egalitarian society." In short, it suggested that an apparent absence of hierarchy was the result of followers' dominating their leaders rather than vice versa. Here a similar line of argument is pursued, with new evidence from an informal but rather extensive world survey of societies that exhibit the effects of "reverse dominance hierarchy."

The Survey

The survey tested the hypothesis that the primary and most immediate cause of egalitarian behavior is a moralistic determination on the part of a local group's main political actors that no one of its members should be allowed to dominate the others. Instead of merely using an individual decision model as a device to explain behaviors *assumed* to be intentional, I limited data assessment to actual group decisions with their reasons and their consequences. The hypothesis itself was potentially somewhat controversial in that it focused upon *purposeful behavior* as a prime mover in shaping social and political life. Rather than restricting the survey to bands and "acephalous" tribes, I became interested in all locally autonomous small-scale communities that seemed to have a low level of ranking or stratification by class and an absence of authoritative leadership. These were the criteria that guided the survey, whether the societies in question were categorized as bands, tribes, or chiefdoms. The object was to see whether intentional behavior (notably, social sanctioning) that had a leveling effect was widespread in such societies and, more specifically, whether it had any significant effects in suppressing the growth of authoritative leadership.

Thus, I set aside early definitions of "egalitarian society" biased in the direction of small foraging groups and concentrated instead on all weakly stratified nonliterate societies, seeking to detect presence or absence of "egalitarian behavior," that is, any intentional behavior that decisively suppressed hierarchical relations among adults as political actors. A basic criterion was that the societies be politically autonomous, since peasants and subject peoples are not really free to define their own political lives. In conducting the survey, I also was interested in seeing whether there might be any small-scale, weakly stratified societies that nevertheless exhibited very strong leadership and, if so, whether an egalitarian ethos or attempts at egalitarian sanctioning coexisted with such phenomena.

The emphasis was placed on "egalitarian behavior"

because it seems arbitrary to contrast "acephalous" societies (including those that Knauft [1991] refers to as "simple foragers") with moderately hierarchical societies exhibiting a stronger role for leaders which nevertheless display firmly egalitarian attitudes and behavior, such as complex hunter-gatherers (Knauft 1991), "big-man" societies (Sahlins 1962) and their "great-man" variants (Godelier 1982), and even chiefdoms in which leadership is relatively weak (see Service 1971; 1975: 304; Flanagan 1989). No societal type reported to exhibit an egalitarian ethos in a politically autonomous setting was excluded from the survey, but both chiefdoms with strong authority and kingdoms were regularly excluded because such societies have significant stratification and dominating leadership and are not reported to exhibit such an ethos.

Of necessity, the essentially qualitative methodology I used was "casual" in comparison with quantitatively oriented cross-cultural research for which sources are adequate.[2] Because of the paucity of detailed reports on interactions between leaders and followers, I decided to forego statistical sampling and look for any piece of evidence or substantial clue that might help to support or falsify my hypothesis. I began with the Tozzer Library collection but eventually searched the ethnographic collections of several other major libraries. Out of approximately 200 politically autonomous societies that were surveyed, about half simply provided no details as to specific dominance interactions of leaders and followers or about the tenor of dominance behavior within the group, while perhaps half that number provided mere hints (e.g., "leaders always were unassuming" or "leaders seem to avoid giving commands"). Thus, well over 100 reports were eliminated because data were not sufficiently specific. Four dozen, however, contained solid and reliable evidence with respect to the specific politically insightful intentional behaviors that shaped the social and political roles of leading adults in their local communities. Thus, about one ethnography in four was fully eligible.

2. The search included bibliographies in published works on political anthropology, especially Service (1975), and a survey of the Tozzer Library's Human Relations Area Files sample as of 1981–82. This amounted to 316 societies, but many lacked local autonomy and, along with a number of authoritative chiefdoms and a few kingdoms, had to be set aside. Also set aside, this time because unambiguous data on intentional egalitarian behavior were lacking, were the great majority of bands and tribes. To enlarge the corpus of adequate descriptions I surveyed the Bureau of American Ethnology series and took cues from the *Handbook of South American Indians*, which originally slanted world sampling toward North and South America. I also made extensive use of the Tozzer Library's subject catalog and took special pains to cover Australia, where aboriginal tribal life with respect to leadership is in a low key, and Asia, where there are few locally autonomous bands. In addition, I used other collections to amplify the corpus, sometimes surveying historical and ethnographic sources that were of marginal quality. For this reason, it is difficult to specify exactly the size of the corpus. Because of time constraints and the serious dearth of adequate ethnographic descriptions, the survey was focused very directly on intentional political behavior and in this sense must be viewed as a preliminary cross-cultural study.

The "reading" of indigenous intentions is one of ethnology's most difficult tasks (Ortiz 1967; see also Boehm 1978, Gladwin and Murtaugh 1980). Avoiding this task allows one to order data nicely in terms of structural/functional or other cultural anthropological models or approaches used for studying animal behavior, but this has two potential disadvantages. One is that where purposeful behavior is sophisticated and geared to the "real world," accounting for its effects may be essential to an adequate causal explanation, yet often we explain the problem solutions arrived at by nonliterate people in terms of other agencies that are unthinking. The other is that in setting aside intentions we risk failing to do justice to native acumen in social, political, or ecological problem solving.

An important assumption of the research was that understanding egalitarian behavior was important enough to justify working with partial or even fragmentary information so long as the sources themselves seemed reliable. A related assumption was that in many routinized leadership situations, the operation of intentions as a curb to the development of authority may be so obscure as to elude the ethnographer. Thus, because I felt the research question to be an important one, I took into account any trustworthy and relevant description in which local autonomy was basically intact and in which contact effects on political behavior were limited and could be reasonably well accounted for.

I emphasize here that even though a substantial portion of the world's ethnographically described societies was surveyed, in a sense the research is preliminary because it focused rather narrowly on data that unambiguously revealed the political intentions of indigenous actors. While many of the data pertain to leaders, of equal interest are others with exceptional physical or supernatural strength, special abilities in gaining subsistence, or an unusual propensity to compete assertively or take other people's lives. This is a study of behaviors that control any main political actor whose assertiveness would otherwise result in an unusual degree of control over others.

These main political actors can be defined as persons who are full members of the political process when important consensual group decisions are made, including decisions about group location, cooperative aspects of subsistence, social sanctioning of deviant individuals, and defense or external aggression. This never includes children, and while women are to be included whenever they are fully participant in group decision processes this surely has been underreported, particularly in older ethnographies.[3] Citing only the sources that provided unambiguous evidence of intentional sanctioning, I shall sum up the results of the survey.

3. Whether males and females in band-level societies are often "equal" as *political* actors is a loaded question and one that easily becomes confused by differences in presuppositions (see discussion following Leacock 1978; see also Begler 1978, Strathern 1987, Lepowsky 1990).

PUBLIC OPINION

Public opinion can act as a check on leadership, as in Tikopia (Firth 1949), and at some point always limits autocratic behavior in any society (Lowie 1940:284). It may operate informally or when people assemble to debate their problems. For people living in small-scale moral communities, negative opinion can be psychologically troubling even when unaccompanied by other sanctions simply because socialization makes them highly sensitive to group disapproval. It can also be predictive of far more forceful sanctioning to come.

Generalizing, Clastres (1977:28) argues that in South American tribes chiefs are controlled by public opinion. According to Lowie (1949:342), among the Cayapo and Canela "a common check . . . appears in the assembly of adult men." Landtman (1938:319) emphasizes that Ashanti councils control ostensibly strong chiefs from behind the scenes. Likewise, Navajo chiefs meeting in council must stay in tune with the people (Shepardson 1967:152); the same is true for Hottentots (Schapera 1967:195). In some cases it is the elders as representatives of public opinion rather than the full assembly that act as a brake on chiefly conduct, for example, among the Tupinamba (Métraux 1948:114), Cuna (Howe 1979:541), Navajo (Shepardson 1967:145–46), Fox (Joffe 1940:271), Yokuts (Gayton 1930:382, 414–15), and Mandari (Buxton 1958:81).

CRITICISM AND RIDICULE

When followers direct criticism at one of their leaders, leveling obviously is intended. For example, when an Iban chief gets out of line he may be charged with partiality, and if he is rash enough to give someone a "command" he is sharply rebuffed (Freeman 1970:111, 113). According to Shepardson (1967:152), among the Navajo "criticizing inferiors" control their leader. The Cuna rebuke their chief for wanting all the power for himself (Howe 1979:540), while males encourage one another to criticize leaders. The Kalahari San cut down braggarts (Cashdan 1980:116), and Mbuti Pygmies shout down a leading hunter who becomes overassertive (Turnbull 1965*b*:180), as do the Shavante (Maybury-Lewis 1967:200).

Ridicule, a special form of criticism, is calculated to place strong pressure on the recipient; it threatens a leader's status because he cannot lead without respect. Among the Hadza, when a would-be "chief" tried to persuade other Hadza to work for him, people openly made it clear that his efforts amused them (Woodburn 1979:271). Any San who tries for personal ascendancy is quickly cut down by ridicule (Cashdan 1980:116). Among Mbuti Pygmies the better hunters who assume leadership functions keep a low profile in group meetings or else they are ridiculed (Turnbull 1965*b*:180, 183). Among the Enga a man who tries to assert authority in a clan meeting is subject to ridicule (Sackschewsky, Gruenhagen, and Ingebritson 1970:77); the same is true of acculturating Ngukurr Aborigines (Bern 1987:218).

DISOBEDIENCE

Another way to teach a prominent man a lesson about the boundaries of leadership and authority is simply to disobey him if he tries to command. Clastres (1977:5) reports that the notion of (male) obedience to another adult is generally foreign to South American Indians. Among the Iban, if a chief tries to command, no one listens (Freeman 1970:113). Nuer either disobey direct orders or obey them insultingly (Evans-Pritchard 1940*a*:182). An acculturating Inuit leader observed by Briggs (1970:56) eventually gave way in the face of group disobedience. The Arapaho, having lost respect for a chief, let him remain "chief" but ignored him as leader (Hilger 1952:189). Among the Bedouin a would-be "king," trying to impress Europeans, was publicly ignored (Dickson 1949:117). Montenegrin tribesmen, who cooperated briefly with the Russian navy to defeat Napoleon's Illyrian Expedition, had great difficulty in comprehending that Russian sailors had to obey their officers apart from combat (Krasinski 1853:18). Among the Chaco, people "turned their backs" on a chief who tried to overrrule their wishes (Clastres 1977:176)

EXTREME SANCTIONS

The ultimate egalitarian political rebuke is to terminate a person's leadership role. The final solution is assassination; in bands or tribes that do not feud, an entire community can do this readily in the absence of "bodyguards" or a loyal "police force." Woodburn (1982:436) points to individual lethal retaliation as a powerful leveling mechanism among the Hadza and one that carries little risk since it can be accomplished by stealth. In certain parts of Arnhem Land, Australian Aborigines traditionally eliminated aggressive men who tried to dominate them (Berndt and Berndt 1964:289), and Spencer and Gillen (1976:263) recount that the Iliaura got rid of a man who was "very quarrelsome and strong in magic" by handing him over to an Arunta vengeance party. In South America after contact, a Yaruro "chief" was killed for making his own deals with outsiders (Leeds 1962:599). A !Kung community may execute "extremely aggressive men" (Lee 1982:47). The !Kung also execute incorrigible offenders (Draper 1978:40), much as the Eskimo collectively kill recidivist murderers and others (see Hoebel 1964:88–92). In New Guinea, according to Knauft (1987:475–76), Gebusi assassination of "sorcerers" (people viewed as being unusually aggressive) parallels this !Kung behavior; however, because Knauft believes that the Gebusi are not singling out unusually aggressive people on a conscious basis, their executions would have to be counted under "witchcraft." For this reason, the Gebusi case and others like it have been set aside.

Of course, in classical feuding societies killing an extremely aggressive person becomes problematic with clan retaliation, but a man's own clan can put him to death with no further killing (Moore 1972). In Montenegro, execution by fellow clansmen was the ultimate

form of ostracism for men who were overly assertive (Boehm 1986*b*). In New Guinea the execution of a prominent individual who has overstepped his prerogatives is secretly arranged by the other members of the multiclan community, who persuade the target's own kinsmen to accomplish the task (e.g., Kapauku [Pospisil 1963:49] and Busama [Hogbin 1951:145]). Likewise, when high status goes to a Baruya man's head and he begins to appropriate neighbors' livestock and force their wives into sexual relations, he is killed (Godelier 1986: 109–10).

Another extreme measure is to depose the leader and appoint another in his place. This was done by the Coeur d'Alene (Teit 1930:153), while among the Assiniboin "remarkable meanness, parsimony, or incest" could result in overthrow (Denig 1930:449) and among the Yokuts a hereditary chief who made unfair decisions or was suspected of too much self-aggrandizement was not formally deposed but ignored in favor of another chief (Gayton 1930:410–11). For Yap, Lingenfelter (1977:240) mentions the deposing of chiefs who do not please their constituents. The Iban's oral legal code called for deposing a chief who showed partiality (Freeman 1970:114). Sachems were deposable in the more centralized Iroquois confederacy (Morgan 1901:85). In Nyakyusa age-villages, a chief could be deposed if he tried to command his headmen (Gulliver 1958:7–8), while Somali pastoralist "sultans" were deposed for being mean or indecisive or showing partiality (Lewis 1961:207). Ostracism is reported only for the Mbuti (Turnbull 1965*a*:228), although sometimes it probably went along with deposition, as did exile in the case of a greedy Nuer priest (Evans-Pritchard 1940*a*:186).

A less direct technique is desertion. Strictly speaking, desertion does not always involve an entire group's moving away and choosing another leader, so sometimes it might better be classified as fission than as the action of a unified unit intent on solving a political problem. However, I have included desertion because often it is in fact the entire group that leaves. The Caraja would desert a bad chief (Lowie 1949:341) and the Chaco a chief who was stingy or could not protect the band from disaster (Métraux 1946:303). Among the Nambicuara, if a chief could not keep food in supply or was too exacting or monopolized the females, the families under him went to another band (Lévi-Strauss 1967:53). Patagonians deserted a chief guilty of misconduct (Cooper 1946:151). The village-dwelling tribal Mizo of Assam would migrate to other locales if a chief was "unduly harsh" (Bandyopadhyay 1985:51), and so would the nomadic Herero (Vivelo 1977:134). The Yanomamo deserted a chief who was too eager for war; Biocca (1970:196–99) provides Helen Valera's detailed personal account of such a negotiation. Likewise, the Apache deserted Geronimo (Clastres 1977:178). The Mescalero would join other bands if their chief was dishonest, unreliable, or a liar (Basehart 1970:101). Among the Iban, if a bad chief was not deposed he might be deserted gradually (Freeman 1970:114), and with the Mandari an entire dissatisfied lineage might simply go away (Buxton 1958:80). Among the Southern Ute, dissatisfied families would do the same (Opler 1940:169), and so would certain Andaman Islanders if the majority chose an unacceptable leader (Man 1882:109; see also Radcliffe-Brown 1922:46). Hottentots also moved away as families or clans (Schapera 1967:196). According to Lepowsky (1990:39) the Vanatinai Islanders, who strongly value personal autonomy, frequently move to change leaders ("big men" or "big women"), as do the subarctic Kutchin (Slobodin 1969:83, 90).[4] In Malaysia, the Batek move away from belligerent men, while the Mendrig desert unfair headmen (Endicott 1988:122).

SUMMARY

Of the 48 societies reporting intentional behavior to control negatively evaluated tendencies of leaders (table 1), 12 come from North America, 11 from Central and South America, 9 from Africa, 2 from the Mediterranean/Mideast, 5 from Asia, 2 from Oceania, 4 from New Guinea, and 3 from Australia. The main subsistence types represented are nomads who primarily gather, primarily or exclusively hunt, or primarily herd livestock and sedentary tribesmen who garden or raise livestock. While at least half of these societies can be roughly classified as "bands" or "tribes" having low-key leadership, a good number are clear-cut "big-man" societies or might be classified as "chiefdoms."

A striking feature of these reports is that assassination is reported in 11 societies out of the 48. "Capital punishment" (see Otterbein 1986, 1987) seems to be rather strongly associated not only with a "simple forager" subtype of band-level society (Knauft 1987, 1991; see also Woodburn 1979; Spencer and Gillen 1976; Berndt and Berndt 1964; Draper 1978; Hoebel 1969) but also with sedentary New Guinea horticulturalists who feud and other warrior tribesmen (see Moore 1972). In all, behaviors that terminated relations with an overly assertive individual or removed him from a leadership role involved 38 of the 48 societies, while in an additional 28 instances the person was manipulated by social pressure. (In many cases a single society exhibited both types of behavior.)

Of some 47 behaviors mentioned as motivating negative sanctioning, being too aggressive (13) and dominating others as leader (14) predominated, along with ineffectiveness, partiality, or unresponsiveness in a leadership role (10). Lack of generosity or monopolizing resources (5), moral transgressions (3), and meanness (2) complete the list. The great majority of these misbehaviors involve dominance or self-assertion. These instances of sanctioning reflect the values by which egalitarian people operate politically.

Witchcraft accusations were classified as automatic leveling mechanisms, but one might argue that sometimes the leveling accomplished by such accusations

4. Brown (1990:102) mentions several other examples of "big women," some in colonial settings, and points out that their role is seldom described.

TABLE 1
World Survey of Egalitarian Sanctioning

Society	Sanction							
	Public Opinion	Criticism	Ridicule	Disobedience	Deposition	Desertion	Exile	Execution
Africa								
Ashanti	x	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hadza	—	—	x	—	—	—	—	x
Herero	—	—	—	—	—	x	—	—
Hottentot	x	—	—	—	—	x	—	—
Mbuti	—	x	x	—	—	—	x	—
Nuer	—	—	—	x	x	—	x	—
Nyakyusa	—	—	—	—	x	—	—	—
San	—	x	x	—	—	—	—	x
Somali	—	—	—	—	x	—	—	—
Asia								
Andaman	—	—	—	—	—	x	—	—
Batek	—	—	—	—	—	x	—	—
Iban	—	x	—	x	x	x	—	—
Mendrig	—	—	—	—	—	x	—	—
Mizo	—	—	—	—	—	x	—	—
Australia								
Arnhem Land	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	x
Iliaura	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	x
Ngukurr	—	—	x	—	—	—	—	—
Mediterranean								
Bedouin	—	—	—	x	—	—	—	—
Montenegrin	—	—	—	x	—	—	—	x
North America								
Apache	—	—	—	—	—	x	—	—
Arapaho	—	—	—	x	—	—	—	—
Assiniboin	—	—	—	—	x	—	—	—
Coeur d'Alene	—	—	—	—	x	—	—	—
Eskimo	—	—	—	x	—	—	—	x
Fox	x	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Iroquois	—	—	—	—	x	—	—	—
Kutchin	—	—	—	—	—	x	—	—
Mandari	x	—	—	—	—	x	—	—
Navajo	x	x	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ute	—	—	—	—	—	x	—	—
Yokuts	x	—	—	—	x	—	—	—
New Guinea								
Baruya	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	x
Busama	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	x
Enga	—	—	x	—	—	—	—	—
Kapauku	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	x
Oceania								
Vanatinai	—	—	—	—	—	x	—	—
Yap	—	—	—	—	x	—	—	—
South America								
Canela	x	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Caraja	—	—	—	—	—	x	—	—
Cayapo	x	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Chaco	—	—	—	x	—	x	—	—
Cuna	x	x	—	—	—	—	—	—
Nambicuara	—	—	—	—	—	x	—	—
Patagonia	—	—	—	—	—	x	—	—
Shavante	—	x	—	—	—	—	—	—
Tupinamba	x	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Yanomamo	—	—	—	—	—	x	—	—
Yaruro	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	x

is intentional. Because such accusations tend to be couched in supernatural terms, I was unable to sort this out and set this question aside for future investigation. Another mechanism that may well be intentional in its origin and, possibly, its maintenance is multiple leadership. Many groups have both war and peace chiefs. War chiefs are expected to command, and it would make sense, in groups that jealously guard their egalitarian political traditions, to take away their leadership roles when they return from the battlefield. Again, I could find no very definite indications of intentionality, so I set aside this issue as well.

Ambivalence toward Leaders

Studies of "egalitarian society" frequently identify an egalitarian ethos, treating it essentially as a reflection of this particular political arrangement (e.g., Fried 1967). An ethos, as defined by Kroeber (1948:292–95), is directly reflected in idealized statements about how people should or should not behave or be. Among the societies surveyed, leadership ideals were described for some two dozen, the great majority providing fragmentary ethnographic impressions rather than comprehensive indigenous lists. Overall, a good leader seems to be generous, brave in combat, wise in making subsistence or military decisions, apt at resolving intragroup conflicts, a good speaker, fair, impartial, tactful, reliable, and morally upright. There are no contradictions here.

A good leader may also be unusually strong, self-assertive, and prestigious. However, other ideals favor unaggressiveness and absence of irascibility, absence of self-aggrandizement, and avoidance of prominence. Because these contradictory patterns are drawn from so many cultures, one can only suggest that some local ambivalence toward leaders might be indicated were the idealized descriptions more complete. But unidealized attitudes toward leaders surfaced in other places and betrayed a solid pattern of ambivalence within single cultures. I have already cited some instances above (Shavante, Navajo, Iban, Pygmies, San), but there are others. The Arapaho expected their chiefs to be strong with whites but humble at home, while the chiefs hated their own unassuming role (Elkin 1940:251). Cuna valued the office but regularly criticized the person holding it (Howe 1979:540). Among the Tiv, "no matter what benefit of prestige or material assistance a man of prominence gives his lineage, its other members fear him and try to whittle him down to their level" (L. Bohannan 1958:55). Similar behavior is reported for the pre-1850 Montenegrin tribal system (Boehm 1983:122–24), while among the Northern Tairora of New Guinea, a "strong man" actually takes antagonism and popular ambivalence as proof of his political potency (Watson 1983:235).

The same type of ambivalence is reflected strongly in indigenous statements or ethnographers' reports that a leader is simply *primus inter pares*. According to Pospisil (1963:47), this phraseology in itself points to a source of contradiction. "First among equals" characterizations are given for several Eskimo groups (Weyer 1967:11), Northern Athapascans (MacNeish 1956:151), Mistassini Cree and Montagnais-Naskapi (Rogers 1969:34), Apache (Basehart 1970:104), Cuna (Howe 1979:543), Somali (Lewis 1961:205), New Guinea (Watson 1983:233; Reay 1967:198; Pospisil 1963:47; Read 1959:433), and the Chenchus (von Fürer-Haimendorf 1943:119). Iban *adat* holds all men to be equal (Freeman 1970:129),[5] and the oral code is explicit that chiefs cannot command others (p. 113); the Eskimo share this outlook (Weyer 1967:11). The same attitude is reported in more stratified societies, where considerable chiefly authority may exist but strong coercive powers are lacking, for example, the refuge-area Montenegrins (Boehm 1983:100), the Tikopia (Firth 1949:170), and the Anuak (Evans-Pritchard 1940*b*:53), whose "king" was seen as an "equal." Only 8 of the 48 adequate accounts of egalitarian behavior were accompanied by a usable description of the political ethos, and invariably this was of the "first among equals" variety. (The remainder of the societies surveyed, in which the descriptions of political behavior were generally far less adequate, provided just 8 more usable descriptions of the local egalitarian ethos.)

The indigenous notion of fundamental parity of main political actors, even though it does not very often find its way into ethnographic reports in the highly specific form of a reliably reported *primus inter pares* ethos, would appear to be intrinsic to egalitarian behavior. An idea that is both manipulative and normative, it is implemented by social sanctioning that involves moral disapproval. As a matter of practice, the ambivalent group of peers tolerates certain kinds of differences even as it carefully stamps out others that threaten its members with sense of inappropriate inequality or domination.

Anticipation of Domination

The findings of this survey support the hypothesis that an egalitarian relation between followers and their leader is deliberately made to happen by collectively assertive followers. One might ask therefore why conflict between followers and leaders is not reported everywhere. First, unusually assertive persons sometimes seem to be excluded from leadership in the first place, and some leaders simply may have no desire for self-aggrandizement or may anticipate the reactions of their constituents and routinely "stay in line." With others, the game may be to push their prerogatives slightly but to back off just before they raise the hackles of followers. Such low-key conflict may be too subtle or occasional to be recorded by a visiting ethnographer. In some societies, by contrast, it may be routine for leading individuals to push their prerogatives to a certain extent and followers to push back; this makes the tension more obvious. (Surely such societies [extreme examples are

5. Rousseau (1980:53) believes that Freeman has overstated the case for equality among the Iban.

Cuna, San, Northern Tairora] are overrepresented among the 48 societies in which egalitarian behavior was identified because of a favorable reporting bias.) Another important variable is the differing social-structural positions and political predilections of particular leaders. Some may be in a better political position for self-aggrandizement than others or have a much stronger propensity for it. Few ethnographers have fully described the particular personalities and power positions of leaders as Lee (1982:47–50) has done in addition to describing the San's traditional style of curbing power abuse (Lee 1979; see also Lee 1988).

Wherever leading individuals basically seem to have been behaving themselves, one might ask why followers so often appear to be vigorous in curbing any hint of domination. The obvious answer is that past transgressions are well remembered, but another is that egalitarian society is not without its other examples of dominance and control. Children are manipulated and not infrequently physically disciplined; younger males and females are very often treated as chattels in marriage arrangements. Married females may be controlled decisively by males, while in many matrilineal-matrilocal societies married males meet with very decisive female economic control. More generally, adult offspring may operate in domestic units that vest substantial authority in the parents.

The data are not detailed enough to permit systematic analysis of these important variables, but I do not think that an absence of reported conflict between followers and leaders necessarily argues against the existence of insightful, purposive leveling; indeed, in other contexts purposive manipulation of cultural patterns can operate either very dramatically or very routinely and unobtrusively (see Boehm 1978). As long as followers remain vigilantly egalitarian because they understand the nature of domination and leaders remain cognizant of this ambivalence-based vigilance, deliberate control of leaders may remain for the most part highly routinized and ethnographically unobvious.

Was Intentional Leveling Universal?

In addition to the 48 small-scale societies that exhibited obvious and purposeful egalitarian control over leaders, there are dozens of others in which leadership at least is reported to be *primus inter pares* or weak (sometimes "nonexistent") or in which earmarks such as "unassuming leadership" seem consistent with deliberate maintenance of political parity. But how likely is it that in these other cases the primary leveling mechanisms are in fact intentional?

Leaving aside for a moment the issue of whether it occurs in an "egalitarian" context, the intentional curbing of power abuse may itself be universal. It definitely takes place in societies devoid of egalitarian ideology, in despotic modern states, in the form of revolution (Lopreato and Green 1990), and in highly centralized kingdoms or authoritative chiefdoms (see Gluckman 1965). Beattie (1967:364–65), dispelling the myth that African kings or chiefs possessed "absolute power," has outlined a number of behaviors by which various well-stratified groups controlled the authority of their own legitimately strong rulers. Followers could restrict the leader's right to impose a death sentence or prohibit the holding of personal property; they formed councils that could reprimand, boycott, or depose a leader; they also withheld economic contributions, moved away, revolted, or resorted to sorcery or even assassination. From his perceptive survey it is clear that Africans living in nonegalitarian, centralized polities were deliberately and effectively setting limits on the (abusive) domination they were willing to tolerate.

If one examines just "chiefdoms," as described by Service (1975), there appears to be something like a continuum between strong, authoritative ones with acceptance of authority of leaders and of social stratification and what might be called "incipient chiefdoms," which can be classified as egalitarian despite hereditary leadership and perhaps some noteworthy permanent ranking or stratification among main political actors (e.g., Lutkehaus 1990).[6] If one assumes that both types of chiefdom and all band and tribal societies designated as "acephalous" or "egalitarian" are capable of curbing power abuse and that in every society at least certain individuals at times will try to use power abusively, then it can be argued that some degree of intentional power curbing by coalitions of subordinates takes place, at least occasionally, in every human society. That many of the small-scale subchiefdom societies surveyed exhibit no strong indications of intentional leveling may be due to the effectiveness of relatively subtle and routinized small-group social control, to the fact that an unambitious leader happened to be in place during the ethnographer's visit, or to the ethnographer's failure to tap indigenous recollection of intentional leveling episodes. In theory, however, if some automatic leveling mechanism(s) acted so strongly on a group that no adult ever attempted to dominate outside of a family or household context, then intentional leveling might never arise. Whether this is likely is important to the interpretation of our human past.

Probably the best test case for the hypothesis that egalitarian behavior once definitively shaped all human societies would be the Australian continent, insofar as certain ethnographers have suggested that Aboriginal tribesmen definitely lack political centralization and automatic leveling mechanisms are very much in evidence. Characterizations of political life include not only "gerontocracy" (e.g., Meyers 1980:208–9; see also Bern 1979) but "absence of leadership" (Sharp 1958:5). By contrast, Berndt and Berndt (1964:303) take the position that a low level of "government" did exist (see also

6. In contrast to what Gluckman (1965:153–62) calls an "authoritative chiefdom," an incipient chiefdom here is one with significant hereditary societal ranking, at least with respect to group leadership, but an egalitarian definition of political relations that limits the authority of leaders.

Pilling 1968). Aside from kin-based retaliatory self-help behavior, Aborigines did also execute individuals on a whole-community basis for transgressing against norms; headmen coordinated the lethal punishment of moral offenders in consultation with elders (Berndt and Berndt 1964:292) and mediated quarrels. But did such leading men, or others who were unusually assertive, ever try to dominate their fellows?

Apparently going against my general hypothesis that individual dominance is deliberately preempted or negatively sanctioned in less-stratified, small-scale societies is the report that in north-central and northeastern Arnhem Land a highly aggressive man may become feared as well as admired, eventually reaching a position of domination. And "so long as he observes the kinship rules, and is careful to conform to sacred laws and ritual obligations, he is rarely punished" (Berndt and Berndt 1964:289). However, the authors believe that this reticence of others to curb him through the usual lethal means is partly a result of contact and fear of external intervention; earlier, such men were executed more readily (see also Meggitt 1962:257; Spencer and Gillen 1976:262–64). Thus, the issues of contact and of full and complete local political autonomy can be critical in evaluating ethnographic reports on egalitarian behavior. In the Australian case, contact probably inhibited sanctioning (see also Bern 1987); but, as seen earlier, elsewhere it also can stimulate emergence of new kinds of "chiefs," would-be "sultans," etc., and thereby can increase the preexisting tension between leaders and followers and bring egalitarian sanctioning out into the open. And in several cases local men who attempted to emulate the strong leadership of external societies were summarily put in their place without concern for external intervention.

How does one interpret these Australian data? Sanctioning behavior was widely reported in a variety of contexts, including personal attempts at domination, and Tonkinson (1978:120) says that the ideal Mardudjara "in behavior is unassuming and not aggressive, egotistical, or boastful to excess." But nowhere does the Berndts' survey of social control practices mention a man specifically designated as group leader who oversteps his prerogatives in a context that could be called "traditional." The fact that an egalitarian ethos is also reported for the Western Desert Mardudjara (Tonkinson 1988:151, 158,163) and that elsewhere other kinds of domineering men occasionally were cut down by execution suggests that politically overassertive group leaders might well have been careful out of fear of execution. Thus, for Australia it can be argued that there are reports of an egalitarian ethos, that other earmarks of egalitarian behavior existed, that aside from leaders overassertive individuals were aggressively sanctioned, and that before contact this probably applied to group leaders if they became overly assertive. On this basis, it would appear that reverse dominance hierarchy operated in Australia.

Another way of exploring the hypothesis that intentional egalitarian sanctioning was once universal is to determine whether any automatic leveling mechanism occurs in the absence of intentional leveling and therefore might sometimes be doing the job all by itself. With one dubious exception, intentional leveling co-occurs with each type of automatic leveling mechanism listed. Sharp (1958:5–6) and Tonkinson (1988:151) report, for Yir Yoront and Mardudjara, complex ego-based dominance-submission networks in which every adult male is subordinate to certain other men while dominating his own network of subordinates. Sharp believes that this particular crosscutting arrangement precludes any group hierarchy, and there is no mention of intentional sanctioning in his report. However, while Tonkinson (1988:151, 155, 158) also sees wider domination as being inhibited by these networks, as well as by pervasive interdependence among the Mardudjara, we have seen that they have an egalitarian ethos and react negatively to "any hint of egotism." These rather definitive earmarks leave open the question whether purposeful egalitarian pressure on political leaders was merely particularly subtle or well-routinized in Australia (as compared with Africa) and therefore remained mostly unreported or sometimes absent, but I favor the former hypothesis.

One must ask also whether there is any record of a basically unstratified small-scale society in which a highly assertive individual dominates the group permanently either because the group simply has no defense against such domination or because egalitarian behavior is present but loses out. In a few reports, an orthodox dominance hierarchy does assert itself in such societies. There are the aforementioned cases of dominant men prevailing in Arnhem Land and a rather detailed case with the Greenland Eskimo, translated by Mirsky (1937), in which a man who was strongly *angakok* (i.e., had strong connections with the supernatural) was able to murder several people serially without being sanctioned by his group; instead, he was fearfully treated with great respect. This failure of the rank and file to mobilize itself could have been a result of contact with the ethnographer's dominant society, but it also is possible that supernatural connections or other forms of charisma may enable unusually threatening individuals to achieve some long-term domination even in small-scale societies that hold to an egalitarian ethic (see also Gayton 1930 for a Yokuts example).

Some other examples of "despotism" in egalitarian society bear mentioning. There is one difficult-to-interpret report for Eskimos in the Bering Strait area of headmen with unusual abilities "ruling" their fellows partly through inspiring fear of being killed and partly through giving them food and presents (Nelson 1899:304). Brown (1990:99) points to the occasional "despot" in New Guinea. Such instances require further research to determine whether such domination develops because egalitarian attitudes or behavior are weak or even absent or whether the right combination of personality factors and supernatural connections (or connections with the modern world) may enable certain individuals to temporarily (or even permanently) dominate their fellows and perhaps even transfer such domination to a successor. Obviously, this could represent a mecha-

nism that helps to move a reverse dominance hierarchy toward an orthodox one.

The data do leave us with some ambiguities, but I believe that as of 40,000 years ago, with the advent of anatomically modern humans who continued to live in small groups and had not yet domesticated plants and animals, it is very likely that all human societies practiced egalitarian behavior and that most of the time they did so very successfully.

Social Scale

One major conclusion, then, is that intentional leveling linked to an egalitarian ethos is an immediate and probably an extremely widespread cause of human societies' failing to develop authoritative or coercive leadership. This is a psychological interpretation. A "material" factor that seems to correlate universally with absence of such leadership is smallness of social scale. Rather than scale's being the more fundamental leveling mechanism, however, it would appear that, in the absence of other constraints such as environmental ones, it is intentional leveling that limits scale. Locally autonomous groups in which authoritative leadership is suppressed are well known to subdivide at a certain basic size, often just a few hundred persons. This takes place not just where resources are sparse but even where they are relatively abundant and where sedentary life gives everyone a local subsistence investment (e.g., Chagnon 1991). I offer this as a hypothesis worthy of testing.

Unfortunately, the scale of nonliterate communities is difficult to study. A nomadic people may have a fluid social organization, "band" size being determined by subsistence possibilities that vary widely over a yearly cycle or from year to year. A "tribal" society, if of the segmentary type (e.g., Evans-Pritchard 1940, Bohannan 1954), may have political units that are isomorphic with small subsistence units one year and many times larger another year, depending on the state of political competition. In the case of bands, total agglomerations of people are never very large, but with segmentary tribesmen, in times of political stress or conflict thousands of people may be living under unified leadership. To complicate matters, where long-term military confederations have developed but egalitarian behavior continues, external political pressures may act as a counterweight against fission, and large populations may remain politically unified over protracted periods. In the face of these difficulties I did not try to determine "group size." However, I believe it is safe to say that in bands, tribes, and incipient chiefdoms the smallest units that exercise full local autonomy usually tend to be far smaller than they are in authoritative chiefdoms, kingdoms, and early states.

Given the conventional wisdom in political anthropology that groups subdivide more readily in the absence of strong leadership, there appears to be an interesting functional interaction between egalitarian behavior and small community size. Egalitarian behavior ensures that leadership will be weak and, as a side effect, that fission will take place readily and communities will remain small. In turn, these local communities may remain too small to develop important factions. Therefore, ordinary people, who are used to decision making by consensus, remain in a good position to form one large coalition and thereby control their leaders and other potential dominators. The primary causal force in this interaction is intentional leveling behavior; the side effect is a society small enough to support such a political tradition. I emphasize that this hypothesis needs further work, but it could help to explain why social scale remained small for so long in prehistory, even in material conditions that could have supported far larger agglomerations.

Reverse Dominance Hierarchy and State Formation

I have made the case that egalitarian behavior arises from dislike of being dominated. At the individual level, this might be called "love of autonomy," but I have chosen to approach it in terms of group values (or ethos) and political coalition formation. Individual dislike of being dominated, reflected in the ethos and reinformed by it, is transformed by small communities into what amounts to social policy. I think it is accurate to call the result a "reverse dominance hierarchy" (Boehm 1984, 1991) because, rather than being dominated, the rank and file itself manages to dominate. So-called acephalous societies and even incipient chiefdoms have reverse dominance hierarchies. By contrast, authoritative chiefdoms, kingdoms, and primitive states are not committed to such egalitarian ideals (even though they recognize and deal with power abuse), and therefore they have dominance hierarchies that are "orthodox" in that they follow a pattern shared with our closest phylogenetic "cousins," the African great apes. Compared with both African great apes and other humans at the strong-chiefdom level or higher, human groups committed to egalitarian behavior have gone in an opposite direction. They have done so because followers discovered that by forming a single political coalition they could decisively control the domination proclivities of highly assertive individuals, even their chosen leaders. This political direction was somehow reversed after the invention of agriculture, and an "orthodox" version of social dominance hierarchy reappeared. This argument is highly relevant to theories of state formation.

To understand the earlier phases of political centralization, I believe it will be necessary to examine what is happening with simple foragers (Knauft 1991), complex hunter-gatherers (e.g., Price and Brown 1985; see also Paynter 1989), various types of "tribesmen" (Sahlins 1968), and both incipient and authoritative "chiefdoms" as the next stage beyond "egalitarian society" (Service 1975), keeping in mind the potentially explosive political tension that would appear to be inherent in any reverse dominance hierarchy. We have seen that in societies with big men (and even in certain ones having

hereditary chiefs and some stratification) the main political actors continue to define themselves as being fundamentally equal and keep their influential leaders in line using the usual egalitarian methods. This obliges us to think about the transition from a reverse to an orthodox social dominance hierarchy, in which the policy of fundamental parity disappears. One must ask whether this transition is likely to be conflictive, abrupt, and violent or gradual, consensual, perhaps even unperceived by indigenous actors.

If strong tendencies toward self-assertion eventually arise in certain persons through individual differences of socialization and personality development and if a strong preference for parity among main political actors is always present in response to such tendencies so long as social scale remains small, then over the course of time there should be occasional conflict over the abuse of power as locally defined. But is this always the case? Beattie (1967:356) explicitly excludes "acephalous" societies because "checks on the abuse of power by indigenous political authorities can only be studied where such authorities exist." Fried (1967:79) appears to take a similar position when he says that "men in these societies do not seem to display any drive for universal dominance within their groups." By contrast, my cross-cultural survey demonstrates that sometimes things can be otherwise, and other writers (e.g., Mitchell 1988:638; Cohen 1985:100; Dumont 1970; Sahlins 1959) imply or state outright that human dispositions that abet hierarchy formation may be innate. Assumptions similar to those of Beattie and Fried may well have kept many anthropologists from making a needed connection between egalitarian political tensions and the evolutionary transitions they attempt to explain. Political centralizations could, of course, have been accomplished by a slow and all but imperceptible transformation, perhaps with followers becoming increasingly identified with leaders (e.g., LeVine 1967; Langlas and Wiener 1988:74) who gradually came to possess legitimized coercive power as the egalitarian ethos was modified. But they may also have involved some kind of decisive conflict (Cohen 1985:100; Paynter 1989; see also Haas 1981).

Cohen (1978) rejects the class-conflict approaches of Childe (1936) and Fried (1967) and labels group-conflict approaches confusing. Citing Service (1975), he argues that "the polity centralizes in response to an increased administrative work-load by the leadership. No class conflict is involved; no exploitation of the ruled by the rulers" (1978:57, emphasis removed). However, I believe a finer assessment of "conflict" and "exploitation" is required: Marxian and other familiar versions of group conflict theory are not very consistent with the conflict inherent in reverse dominance hierarchy because, essentially, egalitarian conflict is between an exceptionally assertive *individual* and the rest of a small local community rather than between "social classes" or even between large political factions. It is highly instructive that if the rest of the group wants an abusive individual executed, his own clansmen may do the job. I think it may be relevant to ask, therefore, whether it was necessary for reverse dominance hierarchy to be overridden from the political center. Current studies that focus on political tensions between egalitarian and hierarchical "principles" (e.g., Flanagan 1989; see also Leach 1954, Crocker 1969, Rousseau 1980, Myers 1980, Bloch 1981, Rigby 1988, Lutkehaus 1990) may offer important clues, as may studies focusing on kinship (e.g., Allen 1984, Lutkehaus 1985) or political acculturation (e.g., Moore 1984, Brown 1987, Kent 1989).

Charismatic leadership, as a form of psychological domination that can be both attractive and threatening, must be considered as well. It is worth emphasizing that people who exhibit egalitarian behavior are not opposed to leadership per se; indeed, they value it so long as the benefits outweigh the penalties. In discussing the Baruya's execution of a man whose high status went to his head, Godelier (1986:109–10) says that "differences between individuals are only permitted . . . insofar as they work for the common good." This statement may well provide the key to how egalitarian political behavior can coexist with a big-man type of society, since with respect to rivalry between groups a big man's prestige rubs off on those associated with him. Such coexistence, also identifiable in incipient chiefdoms, provides a likely basis for conflict, but it also contains the seeds of a nonegalitarian political arrangement, one in which the benefits of further domination may seem worthwhile to the main political actors.

In examining the causes of the transition to political centralization, one must bear in mind that "core dimensions of 'simple societies' are sociopolitical in nature and not completely reducible to factors of subsistence or population density" and that the development of nonegalitarian political organization "is not a determinate function of eco-demographic variables" (Knauft 1991:3; see also Netting 1990). With pristine state formation it is tempting in spite of this to lean very heavily on the "hard" evidence that archaeology and ethnography can provide rather than worrying about "psychology" and the possibly conflictive intentions of political actors. Such analyses do, however, inevitably depend upon general insights into political process gained from extant societies. Thus, while a wide variety of factors have surely been very important in creating conditions that made it possible for leaders to increase their authority, the damping effects of egalitarian behavior also need to be brought into the analysis (see also Paynter [1989:386] on political recalcitrance).

Ethnographically well-documented instances of secondary state formation such as the Cherokee (Gearing 1962) or Montenegro (Djilas 1966) also provide useful information, as do unstable systems such as that of (precolonial) highland Burma (Leach 1954:197–212) and cases in which an egalitarian ethos confronts modernizing economic forces (e.g., Black 1972). These cases and those of complex foragers and incipient chiefdoms demonstrate that a tenacious and purposeful reverse dominance hierarchy can essentially prevail in the face of considerable pressure toward centralization. But while in highland Burma there are equalizing rebellions and in

politically centralizing Montenegro from 1796 to 1850 there was prolonged conflict until a secular confederation leader applied brute force and the tribal system finally collapsed, in incipient chiefdoms such tension generally goes unreported, at least over the very short periods sampled in normal ethnographic description. I suspect that further intensive analysis of micropolitical processes in incipient chiefdoms (e.g., Lutkehaus 1990) could yield general insights useful for explaining political centralization.

Other factors obviously must be reckoned with. One can proceed from this type of evidence to a variety of political-centralization hypotheses, including use of conventional lethal force, supernatural intimidation or "mesmerization" by charismatic leaders, positive identification with a military leader's power or a priest's supernatural connection, centralized economic redistribution under priestly or other control, development of bureaucracies, need for more effective conflict resolution, or internal centralization in the face of external military threats, as well as sedentarization, increased population density, domestication, or economic role specialization.[7] All provide logical approaches to the undermining of reverse dominance hierarchy and the development of centralized authority with coercive power and eventual loss of the egalitarian ethos.

Phylogenetic Considerations

Triangulating from humans and African apes, Wrangham (1987) has characterized our African common ancestor as living in closed social networks with some lone males and no female alliances and hostility between groups, with males stalking and attacking conspecific strangers. His position is that only behaviors present in all three African great apes and humans can be reliably posited to have been present in the common ancestor. He does not focus very directly on either social dominance hierarchy or group leadership, presumably because the egalitarian societies of humans have been so widely considered to lack them. If my interpretation of egalitarian society is correct, then social dominance hierarchy is indeed present in all humans as well as African apes, but with egalitarian followers dominating their chosen leaders in a way that often remains unobtrusive. This means that both some kind of social dominance hierarchy and some degree of group leadership, present in all humans and in all three African great apes, can be plausibly hypothesized to have existed in the African common ancestor.

The above argument has been made at the level of behavior, but implicit in it is the notion that the African common ancestor and its four descendant species are genetically disposed to develop dominance behavior and group leadership. I have cited several theorists who suggest that dominance tendencies may be innate, and I agree with them. However, in considering genetic dispositions to hierarchical behavior, it is important to be as precise as possible about the types of behavior that are readily learned: both competitive dominance and submission are useful to individuals organized by dominance hierarchies, be they orthodox or reverse.

When a behavior is universal or even very widespread, the question arises whether it is not part of "human nature." In beginning to think in more specific terms about human nature as a potential influence on cultural behavior, we may be better off thinking about coevolved genetic predispositions that go in contradictory directions or, more specifically, about the empirically identifiable universal or widespread *ambivalences* these are likely to generate than about monolithic stereotypes such as "warlike" versus "peaceful" (see Boehm 1989). Given that so many locally autonomous small-scale societies exhibit egalitarian behavior, it might be useful to try an "ambivalence approach" here as well.

For the rank and file, a specific situation that predictably evokes mixed feelings (i.e., the dilemma between dominating and submitting) is an attempt by an assertive individual to initiate or increase domination of another adult. In small-scale societies that exhibit very limited hierarchy, potential victims deal with their ambivalence by setting aside their individual tendencies to submit and forming a coalition to control their more assertive peers. As a result, prudent (and sometimes equally ambivalent) leaders set aside their own tendencies to dominate and submit to their groups even as they lead them. I have said that the social result of this interaction is a consensus-oriented community, a group that cooperates well and that remains small because in the absence of strong leadership it so readily subdivides. Its small size in turn tends to keep major factions from forming and stabilizing. The resulting unity of purpose makes it possible for all or most members of local communities to unite against leaders and, by threat of disapproval or active sanctioning, circumscribe their role. These would seem to be the personal and social dynamics that keep a typical egalitarian society in place. One aspect of these dynamics is an egalitarian ethos, both a cause and an effect of the ambivalences just discussed.

In stronger chiefdoms or kingdoms a not too dissimilar underlying ambivalence may exist, but it is accompanied by a very different ethos that legitimizes ranking or class distinctions among the main political actors, substantial exercise of legitimate authority by leaders, and sometimes even physical coercion. These changes are accompanied by a decidedly submissive behavioral standard for the rank and file, which no longer assertively defines itself as "equal," and the emergence of strong leaders who properly look to their own special interests as well as to group interests. They (and, often, their fellow clansmen) are able to dominate their former peers in many areas, but there is still a flash point at

7. Other important variables obviously are the natural, political, and social environments and their effects in constraining or stimulating human tendencies toward hierarchy formation. These were not assessed in detail during the survey, and introducing them into the analysis would make it unwieldy. They will need to be covered if the hypotheses developed are to be tested further.

which really serious ambivalence arises in underlings. It is at this point that Beattie's checks on power abuse come into play. What is distinctive about egalitarian humans is that the rank and file manages to retain the upper hand. The overall approach to solving common problems in these groups is consensual (see Service 1975), and this approach is applied very effectively to the internal political sphere by use of moralistically based sanctioning. Perhaps a key feature in explaining egalitarian behavior is that one person's attempt to dominate another is perceived as a common problem.

An issue I would like to raise, in terms of political dynamics, is whether, as a society becomes increasingly stratified and leadership becomes increasingly authoritative, there may be some systemic "break point" at which reverse dominance hierarchy rather easily tends to turn itself upside down, as it were, and assume an orthodox form. Careful examination of incipient chiefdoms and authoritative chiefdoms could be revealing in this respect, and whatever the findings they would be highly relevant to explaining earlier stages of political centralization that preceded state formation.

Psychological Variables

Social-ecological approaches have contributed mightily to the understanding of human life. Steward (1955) provided anthropologists with a useful hierarchy of causalities within which environmental variables and subsistence patterns shaped social possibilities while "ideology," as a kind of free agent, tended to reflect or merely reinforce the sociopolitical result. Wholly "materialistic" explanations of egalitarian society remain plausible if one examines societies (or even social-ecological types) one at a time and takes the ever-present egalitarian ethos to be a mere dependent variable or reinforcing agency. However, the harsher sanctioning behaviors identified in the survey indicate that over the evolutionary long run it takes considerably more than automatic leveling mechanisms to keep certain leading individuals from dominating their peers. Indeed, it is among simple foragers, who have so many different automatic mechanisms working for them, that group execution of overassertive persons seems to be rather frequent. What I have suggested is that the causal power of ideology as a motivation for political behavior has been seriously overlooked.

Thus, I submit that not only a psychological approach but one that looks to intentional behavior is critical for making sense of egalitarian society. Approaches that look to human intentions really should not be controversial in cultural anthropology, but various materialist paradigms have been heavily favored over the past several decades, and one of these has involved outright derogation of "mentalist" approaches (see Boehm 1988). By contrast, Service (1975:17) says that "purposeful acts are the very motor of society." But we have not proceeded very far in taking that particular engine apart.

In spite of its methodological difficulties, I believe the approach employed here could have wider applicability in trying to pick apart "culture" as a problem-solving process that is guided by realistic and effective purposeful thinking. This will depend very much on the type of problem and the quality of the ethnographic reporting and possibly on whether sanctioning is involved, since acts of sanctioning make intentions rather obvious. More generally, the cognitive assessments, values, intentions, specific goals, and actual dilemmas and decisions of nonliterate people, as assessed, for example, by Meggitt (1977), Turton (1977), Abernethy (1979), Boehm (1983), and Vayda (1989), require far more attention in the study of cultural evolution. In this light, the various sanctions applied by the political rank and file to control its leaders can be viewed as potent and stable retentive mechanisms of cultural selection process (see Campbell [1965, 1972, 1975] for a general description of this process), even though they operate not automatically but deliberately. These intentional behaviors have long maintained a fundamental political parity for main political actors and as an unintended side effect have helped to keep groups small. These mutually reinforcing patterns, one deliberate and the other automatic, produced the egalitarian community that constitutes an important baseline for human political evolution.

Conclusions

I have taken some methodological license here in order to develop several hypotheses about the operation of human political intentions through qualitatively oriented cross-cultural research. I think this "intentional" variable has been neglected, both because of some serious difficulties with ethnographic reporting and because social-ecological interpretations of "egalitarian society," though ultimately ungeneralizable, have fitted so well with the facts. I have suggested that "egalitarian society" needs to be reconceptualized in terms of some universal causal factor and have proposed a specific behavioral explanation in terms of reverse dominance hierarchies: the main political actors idealistically define themselves as peers, and on a practical basis they make certain that their basic parity is not too seriously damaged by individual domination. This viewpoint takes human intention to be a powerful independent variable, one that interacts, obviously, with important constraints of social scale, social organization, and natural and political ecology.

Granting the serious limitations of reliable data, simple foragers, complex hunter-gatherers, people living in tribal segmentary systems, and people living in what I have called incipient chiefdoms would appear to exhibit a strong set of egalitarian values that express an active distaste for too much hierarchy and actively take steps to avoid being seriously dominated. In a sense, these societies may be considered to be intentional communities, groups of people that make up their minds about the amount of hierarchy they wish to live with and then see to it that the program is followed. So long as all of

the main political actors continue to define themselves as peers and are able to make this definition stick, a reverse dominance hierarchy is maintained even though certain features of hierarchy may be present. When authority becomes strong and intergenerationally transmitted and when classification of people into hierarchical categories takes on serious meaning for their lives, the transition from reverse dominance hierarchy to orthodox dominance hierarchy is complete, even though limits to domination are still recognized and enforced.

Social hierarchization and political centralization appear to be germinally present in simpler societies in the form of innate tendencies of individuals to dominate their peers. A general issue for future investigation is whether the transition from reverse to orthodox dominance hierarchies is generally sudden and conflictive or gradual and perhaps even devoid of tension. Important insights may come from the study of political tensions in big-man societies, incipient chiefdoms, long-lasting tribal confederations, and instances of secondary-state formation, in which the conflicts and rapprochements between the stronger leaders and their egalitarian "peers" can be placed under an ethnographic microscope.

The main feature of social organization that seems to correlate with reverse dominance hierarchy is a relatively small, locally autonomous community. It is true that material constraints such as scattered resources do sometimes place absolute limits on scale, but such conditions are present only in a minority of cases that are not typical of our natural history from Cro-Magnon on. By contrast, I have suggested that smallness of scale may be a predictable side effect of egalitarian behavior because such behavior keeps groups subdividing, while small, intensively cooperative groups remain able to unite effectively and control their leaders. In short, there could be an important functional symbiosis here that might be useful in helping to explain why human groups seem to have remained minuscule for so many millennia. Further research is needed to resolve this question and many of the others I have raised. Ideally, the data and concepts presented here will help to clarify the political arrangements of our planet's smaller societies and perhaps stimulate some further research into important political microprocesses such as those I have surveyed before it is too late.

Comments

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More serious attention needs to be given in anthropological circles to ideology as a causative force. Although I am in sympathy with Boehm's argument, I find it not all that convincing. That domination and the exercise of power generate resentment would seem a commonplace, but materialists will argue that the group's curbing of domination is an epiphenomenon of material circumstances. Boehm has pointed to the relation of the egalitarian ethos to group size but quite reasonably suggests that social scale may in fact be caused by the "intentional leveling behavior." In addition to social scale, we need to know what the relationship is between other material factors and the ideological. Why is the dislike of domination intense in some societies and not in others? It seems to me that, as with other social phenomena, egalitarianism has a multiplicity of causes, one of which is ideological.

Boehm does not mention several leveling devices of some importance. Dole (1966) has argued that many South American tribes probably once had stronger chieftains. Recent demographic and social disturbances have forced many remnant groups to consolidate, and this disrupts the normal pattern of hereditary office through the male line. The strength of leadership is tied to patrilineality, and where this disappears the authority of a headman is undermined. Clastres (1977), in contrast, ties the importance of the chief in South America to the fact the chief does not observe the normal rules of reciprocity because of his acquisition of a multiplicity of wives and therefore remains in perpetual debt to his people and must become their servant. Foster's (1965) image of limited good may be of limited value but is suggestive of another leveling mechanism.

I am rather surprised that Boehm was unable to assemble a larger sample. I can think of numerous additional peoples which fit his criteria. Elizabeth Colson makes it clear, for example, that in Tonga society concentration of power is kept to the barest minimum.

Boehm does not seem to have followed his own criteria in selecting the sample cultures. Thus, it would seem that the Montenegrins and, possibly, the Asante have a large peasant component. Also, both Montenegrins and Bedawin may be predominantly illiterate, but they are not nonliterate. Bedawin culture is hardly an autonomous entity; as noted by Kroeber, it is a part-culture, inextricably bound to the urban and rural-peasant segments of Arab society. Berbers would appear to be as appropriate as Montenegrins. Descriptions of Kabyle Berbers and the several studies on a variety of Moroccan Berber groups clearly point to a consensus-oriented acephalous society in which leadership is rigidly controlled. After all, they call themselves Imazighen, "the free men." Although peasant societies are not, as Boehm observes, ordinarily autonomous societies but dependencies of autocratic states, some peasant populations, such as the Berbers, have traditionally resisted central state authority, while in others the village community has been characterized as egalitarian. In many peasant situations the village has been left with a high degree of independence so long as it provided the appropriate tribute and corvée and in this independence developed considerable egalitarianism. I have argued that the Egyptian village has many egalitarian attributes and that a kind

of dialectic operates between the ideas of equality and inequality (Barclay 1970).

I do not know that "egalitarian" is an appropriate term for the systems Boehm refers to. As he himself notes, egalitarian societies are not egalitarian when it comes to women and children, and some egalitarian societies practice slavery. For others, such as the Australians, equality is the happy circumstance of the elder males alone. Boehm's term "reverse dominance hierarchies" is rather awkward. I would call these "anarchic" societies, having leadership but no government or true legal sanctions (Barclay 1990).

On the subject of state formation I would add to Boehm's criticism of Marxism that most Marxists have difficulty dealing with state formation because they see power as a product of economic forces when the modern world provides abundant evidence for the derivation of power from bureaucratic and military positions and the command of knowledge. Mikhail Bakunin, who predicted exactly what Marxist states would become, and Max Weber were better critics of the direction of centralizing social systems than Karl Marx.

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Boehm's account of egalitarian societies is a Christmas pudding of insights and intellectually provocative analyses. The stress on human intentionality is timely (cf. Robarchek 1989). Its main weakness lies in claiming too much for its central concept, "reverse dominance." The reality of this phenomenon is not in question; in my experience, levelling behaviors certainly occur routinely among village Chinese and Semai and Temiar horticulturalists of Malaysia (e.g., Benjamin 1968). What is debatable is whether "reverse dominance" is a (1) necessary and (2) sufficient cause of egalitarianism, as Boehm seems to claim.

Part of the difficulty comes from phrasing the concept in primatological terms when its ideological ancestry seems to be in the political science notion of "countervailing powers" of the 1950s and the "conflict theory" of the 1960s and 1970s. To phrase people's resistance to domination as itself "dominance" requires some intellectual fast footwork; in what sense, for example, is fleeing an oppressive situation itself oppressive? Yet this sort of flight underlies the "fission-fusion" demographic pattern characteristic of many egalitarian societies (Fix and Lie-Injo 1975). Indeed, English words for dominance tend to imply inability to flee: "oppressing" (squeezing) or "confining." Why equate predator and prey? Rather than seeking a biological origin within the Anthropoidea it might be useful to refer to the so-called Premack Principle (named for a libertarian psychologist who worked with chimpanzees), a laboratory observation that organisms given the choice will always prefer rewarding themselves to being rewarded by "caretaker organisms." This preference has obvious survival value in most cases. In anthropomorphic political terms, most sentient organisms seek freedom rather than dominance.

In either formulation, using a supposedly universal phenomenon like reverse dominance to explain particular ones like egalitarian society can seem circular. Both China and the United States have strongly egalitarian ideologies, Daoist-Maoist and Enlightenment respectively (cf. Hofstadter 1962); the ruled in both societies use many of the tactics Boehm describes to limit the powers of their rulers. Boehm suggests that the scale of society may be one factor limiting dominance but is inexplicit on how scale gives rise to social behavior that overwhelms a universal biogenic human tendency. Simple coercion can institute a government but not maintain it in the long run. Ultimately, governments require the consent of the governed in some form, as Boehm suggests. Political scientists call that consent "legitimacy." How do rulers get it? Here one needs to consider concepts like "ideological hegemony," which is in the realm of ideas the equivalent of dominance in the realm of politics, or what Bruno Bettelheim calls "identification with the aggressor," of which the "Stockholm syndrome" is a limited instance.

For egalitarianism to endure other factors than those that Boehm considers need to come into play. For example, individual autonomy and self-control are vital (Gardner 1991, Dentan 1992). "Society cannot exist unless a controlling power upon will and appetite be placed somewhere, and the less of it there is within, the more there must be without. . . . men of intemperate minds cannot be free. Their passions forge their fetters" (Burke 1982 [1791]:48). One might argue with Burke about which type of control comes first but not that control is necessary. Boehm's argument suggests, convincingly to me, that egalitarianism is chronologically prior to stratification (and cf. Knauft 1991). But, since that argument does not directly address the issue of self-control, it leaves the impression that egalitarianism involves a quasi-Hobbesian "war of each against all" which is fundamentally implausible.

My own suspicion is that, in many egalitarian societies, people share an attitude for which there is no ready English equivalent but which Daoists call *wu wei* (roughly, "not striving"), Amish and Hutterites *Gelassenheit,* and members of the Rainbow Nation "going with the flow." The core seems to be an emotional detachment from the consequences of one's actions, which results in a sense of serenity that makes questions of dominance irrelevant. This is not the place to expand upon this idea, but it seems important for "intentional" egalitarian communities (see Dentan n.d.).

My other comments are niggling. Although Boehm admits that his "sample" is not representative, surely his library had more information on Asian societies than he uses (and cf. Otterbein 1991). Similarly, on theoretical issues, it is surprising to find no reference to the work of Clayton Robarchek (e.g., 1979, 1989) and Peter Gardner (e.g., 1991), who anticipate many of his points.

This is an admirable piece of work which deserves a wide audience and discussion. To say that it does not

cover all the issues involved is merely to admit that the space constraints of the "review article" genre preclude a full account.

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I agree with Boehm's views on reverse dominance hierarchy and am grateful to him for having introduced ethics into the study of the political behavior of the "first" human societies. Our dominant evolutionist trend used to chart a continuum from animal societies to economically developed states. Boehm's documented argument suggests instead a balanced evolution over millennia, with human society beginning in opposition to its animal base; democracy preceded the various inegalitarian and coercive forms of political organisation and now arises anew. Ambivalence was one of the first notions that occurred to me when I began studying the various political forms employed by the Teke of the Congo, and from it I turned to the idea of contradictory and antagonistic political strategies deliberately chosen in response to changing conditions. Boehm's paper is an interesting breakthrough; we now know that human societies have from the start deliberately controlled their history and created the tools necessary to do so. The surprise is that this should be surprising.

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Boehm's conclusion that "political tensions in big-man societies, incipient chiefdoms, long-lasting tribal confederations, and instances of secondary-state formation" are likely sources of insight into the transition from reverse to orthodox dominance hierarchies agrees with my conclusions from long-term field research among ranked yet economically egalitarian peoples of the Northwest Amazon (see, e.g., Hill 1984, 1989). An implicit corollary to Boehm's hypothesis is that leaders organize followers' intentions to construct hierarchy on a consensual basis. In the ranked societies of the Northwest Amazon, it makes little sense to treat leveling and the building of hierarchy as separate processes.

The headman of an Arawakan village in which I worked had developed a strategy based on organizing the production of surplus horticultural goods for trade that relied heavily upon his authority over the households of his married daughters and was tolerated because of its traditional precedent in bride service. When the sons-in-law sided with missionaries in favor of establishing a "store" in the village, the headman attempted to coerce them and brought down on himself the traditional leveling mechanism of shaming: his mother-in-law shouted out the sacred totemic names of his mythic ancestors—a deliberate act of desecration. This example fits Boehm's model, but at the same time it throws into relief two dimensions that are absent from his account. First, the leveling resulted not from individual intentions alone but from the interaction between them and the largely unconscious collective processes of group empowerment embodied in shared beliefs about the primordial hostility between affines and the power of totemic names. Second, the story involves the relations among indigenous Arawakans, mestizo townspeople, and Catholic missionaries. Why reject any case in which interethnic relations have permeated the local political community when it is as capable as the "autonomous" community of providing insights into egalitarian political behaviors? Ethnologists and historians of Lowland South America largely agree that the egalitarian behaviors of its peoples can be interpreted only in relation to the drastic losses of life, land, and autonomy that began with the introduction of Western diseases, manufactured goods, and political institutions in the early colonial period and continued through the rubber boom and the missionization, frontier expansion, and militarization of the Amazon Basin. These peoples are all survivors of the "Great Dying" (Wolf 1982) and a plethora of transformations that have left them marginalized with respect to nation-states and global economic relations. If Boehm's criterion of excluding all cases except those in which "local autonomy was basically intact" were to be taken at face value, few of the examples that he cites in support of his hypothesis would have any legitimacy.

Perhaps the most outstanding examples of the articulations of local struggles for reempowerment with broader processes of ethnic disempowerment come from Africa (see, e.g., Comaroff 1985, Smock 1969). Smock demonstrated how the trade union (a "leveling mechanism" of industrialized capitalist societies) was used to produce structural inequality between surface workers, who controlled the discourse of electoral politics (as well as the coercive force of British colonial troops), and miners, who were almost totally mystified by the electoral process and denied the right to strike to improve their working conditions and compensation. Ibo communities have remained fiercely egalitarian throughout centuries of slave trading, colonial and "indirect" rule, and modernization. Smock's study of emergent stratification in Ibo trade unions suggests that scale is less significant for understanding the transition from reverse to orthodox dominance hierarchy than two forms of specialization: (1) the differentiation of economic roles as mental versus manual and (2) the fragmentation of discourse into specialized vocabularies that radically alter not only the style but the objects of speech.

Boehm asks whether the transition from reverse to orthodox dominance hierarchies is generally conflictive or gradual. The examples just mentioned suggest that it is most often violent because the specializations it involves are fundamentally antithetical to egalitarian social orders. The exemption of leaders from the production of subsistence goods shifts the goals of social reproduction from the replacement of social capital between

generations (Fortes 1958) to the production of material and status inequality. The emergence of specialized discourses takes control over vital forms of knowledge—ecological, mythic, historical, etc.—away from relatively autonomous political communities and places it in the hands of a regional or imperial ruler, who in turn uses it to define a political center.

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Boehm's article is interesting and provocative. He asks some good questions, but I do not always find his answers convincing. I question, for example, his assumption of an innate, universal human propensity for dominance hierarchy and the universality of the leader-follower relationship. Instead of hierarchies and group leaders, I suggest, highly egalitarian societies may have situational, temporary, and nonbinding "leaders" who are leaders only because ethnographers or others have labelled them as such (Kent 1989, n.d.). These tend to be individuals (such as particularly good hunters or gatherers) whose opinions are more highly valued than those of others in specific situations (such as locating plants and animals) (see, e.g., Silberbauer 1981, 1982) but are rarely perceived as leaders by the rest of the society. In other words, it may be that some highly egalitarian societies have "leaders" only because of the perceptions of outsiders.

In my experience with egalitarian groups, aggressive-assertive individuals are rarely if ever leaders, even if that is their hidden agenda. We need to ask whether sanctions are employed to control leadership aspirations or simply to control deviant assertive behavior. For instance, Boehm refers to my (1989) description of the gang beating of an aggressive individual in a recently sedentary, acephalous Kalahari community. A group, primarily of men but including women, physically punished the aggressor for this socially unacceptable behavior—that is, for being a deviant rather than for being a would-be leader. Although the person who organized the beating once expressed to me a desire to be a leader, no one has ever regarded him as in any way politically distinct.The Navajos among whom I have worked (Kent 1983, 1984) also have sanctions against what is perceived to be overly assertive behavior, but I suggest that these sanctions are against deviance rather than desires for leadership.

I disagree with Boehm's view that there is an innate behavioral trait of dominance that is expressed only in some males. In addition, I have difficulty with the proposition that intrinsic to all societies is a power-curbing mechanism to ward off such behavior; not all or even a majority of individuals in any one society will try to use power abusively or aspire to leadership.

I also wonder if assumptions concerning hierarchies, assertiveness, and dominance can be generalized as "human nature" when women are basically excluded from study, despite the importance of their political activities in egalitarian societies (see, e.g., Lee 1982; Silberbauer 1982). Boehm's definition of political leadership as pertaining only to males unintentionally implies that women are not as assertive even in highly egalitarian societies or that political proclivities are not part of human nature, only male nature. How do assertive women in egalitarian societies fit Boehm's theory?

The issues Boehm raises are important ones, although I have problems with the conclusions and their implications. Whereas his ideas require some refinement and rethinking, they nevertheless seem to me worth pursuing.

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How personal agency translates into effective collective resistance to domination by leaders is a major issue in current social theory but one seldom considered in evolutionary terms. Boehm's suggestion that egalitarianism was universal and maintained through reverse dominance hierarchies among anatomically modern humans prior to plant and animal domestication is creative and pregnant with theoretical implications, but his argument requires refinement.

On the positive side, the argument plausibly explains a major aberration confronting sociobiological and individual-maximization theories of human social evolution: how is it that males in simple human groups are so frequently egalitarian when both great apes and more politically complex human societies exhibit marked male dominance hierarchies? His notion that dominance hierarchies are not absent but effectively "reversed" through active collective social control of leaders has the advantage of maintaining the empirical distinctiveness of adult male egalitarianism in decentralized human societies without making it a developmental anomaly. What it does not do, however, is explain what it is about human culture (and no other known organismic system) that allows rule-governed and morally encoded social control among conspecifics who are often only distantly related. The problem is especially pronounced given the personal autonomy that would otherwise encourage self-interested cheating and make reciprocal altruism an evolutionarily unstable strategy in small-scale human groups (Boyd and Lorberbaum 1987; cf. Trivers 1985). At the same time, as Boehm recognizes, it does not explain why reverse dominance hierarchies and egalitarian social control begin to wane with the rise of food production and increasing political complexity. He unduly limits the connection between his argument and dual-inheritance models of human cultural evolution, on the one hand, and trajectories of socioecological adaptation and historic change, on the other.

In launching a bold and creative hypothesis, Boehm is justified in foregrounding his own level of analysis, but

there is little reason to exclude the effects of either socioecological constraints or the unique characteristics of human cultural transmission and symbolic communication. His argument is consistent with cultural selection for sharing both information and large-unit foodstuffs among mobile human foragers exploiting patchy and dispersed resources. Reverse dominance hierarchies as a norm would appear to have been unlikely prior to the advent of sharing and cooperation. This marks a qualitative change from nonhuman-behavior models: a cultural ethos of equality underpins the moral and social control of assertive leaders through collective and cooperative action among followers who may be only distantly related or unrelated. Because these actions reinforce a moral norm of equality rather than simply serving to dethrone one leader in favor of another, they are importantly informed by cultural rules and difficult to explain on the basis of competitive self-interest alone.

The large range of variation in small-scale human societies belies the notion that egalitarianism and reverse dominance hierarchies are universal in any simple sense among pre-food-producing but anatomically modern humans (see Kelly 1993). The admirable cross-cultural range of Boehm's ethnographic examples makes it possible but far from certain that reverse dominance hierarchies existed in the various societies he mentions; no alternative hypotheses or means of falsifying the hypothesis are considered. Further, it is a separate and undiscussed issue whether societies here termed "egalitarian" are in fact egalitarian in terms of gender and age; Boehm's thesis applies to egalitarianism among *adult men*. These caveats notwithstanding, Boehm's characterizations are likely correct for male politics among many if not most of the nonintensive foragers in the ethnographic record.

By focusing on intentionality, Boehm creates an important potential bridge between the study of human social evolution and the current interests of many sociocultural theorists in individual agency vis-à-vis reflective/ unreflective practice, maintenance of or resistance to hegemonic cultural orientations, and the implications of these for sociopolitical status differentiation. Sociocultural considerations of domination, resistance, and strategic practice (e.g., as discussed by Bourdieu, Foucault, Gramsci, and Stuart Hall) tend to be excluded from the study of prehistoric sociocultural formations and from the more reductive materialist and natural selection models favored by many paleontologists, archeologists, and behavioral ecologists. It is sad but true that many contemporary cultural anthropologists have written off the study of human social evolution, considering it too distant from their concerns. Arguments such as Boehm's, though they fail to draw explicit connections with wider issues in cultural and post-Marxist theory, may help to narrow this gap. Boehm's argument also begins to illuminate the political distinctiveness of small-scale human societies and the interconnections between them and both prior and subsequent evolutionary developments.

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I have long suspected, and am now convinced after reading Boehm's paper, that the concept of egalitarian society is utterly meaningless. To use Boehm's term, found in another context, it is a "monolithic stereotype." It masks tremendous variation in behavior. Examination of the tables makes this point clear. The societies included range from hunters and gatherers to states, and the "sanctions" cover a vast array of behaviors. My own research on feuding, warfare, and capital punishment, using probability samples, has shown wide variability in these behaviors. To label them as collective violence would make no more sense than labeling the "sanctions," as a group, egalitarian behavior. In several recent comments in CA I have described the variability as it pertains to hunters and gatherers (1987, 1988, 1991). It is time we stopped trying to force these societies and many more into the egalitarian-society mold.

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I take Boehm's intentions to be, first, to seek a "single general theory" that explains "egalitarian behavior in all of its forms" and, second, to restore the concept of intentionality to explanations of human social behavior. His method is a qualitative evaluation of a large sample of the ethnographic literature, and his theoretical product is a concept of reverse dominance hierarchy whereby egalitarian collectives exert control over emergent and would-be leaders by means of sanctions ranging from shaming and ridicule to homicide. Boehm believes that his research provides evidence that reverse dominance hierarchy was a universal characteristic of prehistoric societies and that the formation of early states occurred through an inversion of the direction of dominance that may have been sudden or gradual.

With respect to a causal theory, it is unclear whether Boehm sees this as explaining why people favor egalitarian arrangements or explaining how such arrangements are maintained. Reverse dominance hierarchy does provide a plausible description of the maintenance of egalitarian systems, but in explaining why they should be preferred in some societies, he seems to fall back on a natural human proclivity for egalitarian arrangements that is "just so"—hardly a general causal theory.

The notion that individuals act with the intention of maintaining their preferred social or political arrangements is one that is shared by a number of theoretical strands in sociology and anthropology. There is less agreement, however, about where intentions come from (how preferences are formed) and how individual preferences are accommodated in societal utility functions

(Arrow's famous paradox in economics). It seems to me that these are the challenging issues about the role of intentionality in social behavior that Boehm does not address.

The effort to detect intentionality in a qualitative evaluation of a large sample from the ethnographic literature is heroic but presents methodological difficulties. Boehm tells us that he used only "the sources that provided unambiguous evidence of intentional sanctioning," but it is therefore hardly surprising that "the findings of this survey support the hypothesis that an egalitarian relation between followers and their leader is deliberately made to happen by collectively assertive followers." Boehm emphasizes the preliminary nature of his study. However, in the final analysis, only a carefully designed research protocol involving live subjects can hope to distinguish intentional levelling from unconscious status adjustments.

As Boehm implicitly acknowledges, it is difficult to distinguish reverse dominance hierarchy from any number of sanctioning behaviors, ranging from shaming and ridicule to homicide, that societies use to keep leaders in line. When norms of social conduct governing the deportment of individuals in leadership roles are breached, offenders are sanctioned. There does not seem to me to be anything peculiarly egalitarian about this principle. Unless I am missing something, Boehm seems simply to have selected cases in which the norms happen to be egalitarian.

Finally, although rightly critical of the equation of egalitarianism with small-scale nomadic foraging societies, Boehm nevertheless accepts the conventional definition of egalitarianism in terms of what it is not—i.e., in terms of the relative absence of ranking and stratification. It is ironic that he cites my edited volume with James Flanagan (Flanagan and Rayner 1988) in support of this definition, since our purpose in preparing that book was to define egalitarianism according to the attributes it does possess as a rules system for maintaining parity among individuals or social subunits (factions, clans, lineages, etc.). From an evolutionary perspective, I have argued that such rules systems may exhibit far greater measurable information-theoretic complexity than the rules systems necessary to maintain hierarchical political structures (Rayner 1988). If evolution tends in the direction of increasing complexity, we might be tempted to argue that hierarchy was the original state of human society and egalitarian social systems developed as a response to it (a view that is not inconsistent with the primate record). Indeed, many egalitarian societies, ranging from the Bushmen and the Mbuti to religious sects and intentional communes, exist as a consequence of withdrawal from contact with or participation in hierarchical systems. In our introduction to *Rules, Decisions, and Inequality*, Flanagan and I reversed the conventional assumption about social development—that complex societies develop from an initial egalitarian state by the accretion of rules. However, the empirical evidence is inconclusive. In any case, the development of human society may be better described in terms of a dynamic tension between egalitarian and hierarchical modes illustrated by the cyclical patterns of Leach's highland Burma (Gross and Rayner 1985) and the levelling cycles of New Guinea cargo cult activity (Rayner 1982).

Interestingly, both of these examples and other case studies indicate that the transformation of egalitarian intentional communities into centralized hierarchies requires as a precondition that leaders exert effective control over the boundary of the group (Mars 1986, Rayner 1986). Boehm notes the fissiparous tendencies of egalitarian groups. If we cannot establish the evolutionary priority of equality and hierarchy, then we may do well to focus on the processes of withdrawal, levelling, expulsion, and routinization. These processes hold the key to the persistent and complex interplay between hierarchy and equality that continues to be a major element in contemporary public policy debates.

Reply

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For nearly four decades, "egalitarian" or "acephalous" society has been an indispensable analytical icon, but the icon has seriously eroded around the edges. The original concept was too specifically based on nomadism, too idealized, and too narrowly explained as an effect of material circumstances or social structure. It was a projection of investigators socialized in modern political societies that were hierarchical and centralized but nevertheless maintained an egalitarian ideology. Because of this tension, we tended to stress the "equality," all but ignoring status discrepancies and even very low-key leadership. The result was a caricature. Gradually we discovered that an egalitarian ethos might coexist with some significant degree of ranking and could be found in tribal warrior and even big-man societies. Badly in need of overhaul, the caricatured model persisted because "egalitarian society" was so useful for analysis. My efforts here have had two aims: to provide a general explanation for egalitarianism and to examine the possibility of bringing the intentions of nonliterate people more explicitly into ethnological analysis.

Enough of the comments and criticisms have focused on methodological problems to justify providing additional details about the research project itself. My own field experience with egalitarian people has been (rather briefly) with Navajos and (mainly) with politically extribal Montenegrin transhumant pastoralists, technically peasants, whose egalitarian ethos in 1965 was tattered but still strongly in evidence. Because the ethnohistorical materials for Montenegro were excep-

tionally rich, I also studied their egalitarian ethos and its fully tribal social expression before indigenous state formation in 1850. The only foragers I have studied are the wild chimpanzees who provide the model for orthodox dominance hierarchy.

One thing that students of "egalitarian society" seemed to agree upon was that "leveling mechanisms" were needed to account for the absence in many world societies of marked stratification and strong leadership, but it was rarely asked why such mechanisms were needed. A few references to innate hierarchical tendencies provided the only general hypothesis in print when I began the research, and my familiarity with the literature on primate social dominance hierarchies made this appealing to me as a working hypothesis. But hypotheses about hierarchical tendencies merely identified what the leveling mechanisms were working against. The closest thing to a general explanation was the impression that people love their autonomy, and, while I agree with Dentan that many scholars would support that conclusion, the causal basis for it is not very clear. Hoping to clarify this, I developed the second working hypothesis that the human nature that encouraged individuals to dominate was at the same time supporting individual tendencies to *resist* domination; such tendencies, with social amplification and some means of implementation, seemed sufficient to produce leveling. I thought that these hypotheses might be combined to explain "egalitarian societies" and "acephalous societies" as instances of collective behavior aimed at curtailing individual domination similar to that identified by Lee (1979) and Woodburn (1982). Because such behavior involved purposeful sanctioning, I had to face the issue of "intentionality." I welcomed this challenge because I felt that anthropologists had relied too heavily on reductionist explanatory schemes that either took indigenous strategic input for granted or dealt with it obliquely.

The wide range of criticisms and comments reflects both the complexity and difficulty of the issues that attend the concept of egalitarian society and problems of the quality of ethnographic reporting and the subtlety of egalitarian sanctioning. Early in the survey I realized that although I was focusing on the abuse of power in small-scale societies, what I was really after was any abuse of power outside of the immediate family. I also realized that curbing power abuse specific to leaders took place even in very hierarchical societies. For this reason I took the presence or absence of a definite egalitarian ethos as the line of demarcation; this type of ethos disappears in authoritative chiefdoms and kingdoms even though it partially reemerges in ancient and modern democracies. Because a society's political ethos often goes unreported and past egalitarian sanctioning may be elusive, I knew that I was potentially in some trouble with respect to falsifiability criteria if I wished to make universal claims for my hypotheses. For that reason I chose a relative-plausibility argument, hoping to stimulate the kind of debate that such arguments engender. I cast the discussion in terms of *egalitarian behavior* rather than "egalitarian society" both because the social type had become too diversified and because I wished to focus on cultural process and emphasize indigenous intentions.

Otterbein indicates that "egalitarian behavior" is simply too general a concept to be useful in cross-cultural analysis. But decisive control of the abuse of power by leaders (and others) in little-centralized societies that subscribe to a *primus inter pares* ethos is empirically distinguishable from the situation of centralized polities that lack an egalitarian ethos, and this is a distinction that can be useful for typological and processual analysis if one is interested in larger questions. It is by exploring such questions, I think, that eventually some more precise subcategories can be developed.

Rayner asks whether I am explaining *how* or *why*, and this is a searching question. Here, the specific how hypothesis is focused on indigenous methods of solving social problems, specifically, the sanctioning and distancing of upstarts. This brings up a why question pertaining to their intentions: why do the main political actors individually not like being dominated, join together to create and maintain an egalitarian ethos, and in practice try to make this stick? The ultimate why hypothesis stems from the two contradictory propensities in human nature mentioned above. A year and a half in the field has convinced me that few if any adults in a chimpanzee dominance hierarchy prefer their submissive roles to dominating; indeed, for males aggressive pursuit of domination amounts to something of a lifelong career (see also Goodall 1986, Nishida 1967, de Waal 1982). These tendencies provide substantial food for thought if one considers them together with the fact that, although the smallest human societies have anticonflict ideologies and a high degree of group conformity, there are always some individuals so aggressive that they must occasionally be put to death by the entire group acting as a defensive coalition.

If one wishes to explore the why question in more immediate terms, this will have to be done not at the genetic level but in terms of psychodynamics or social dynamics or the analysis of choice behavior. Then, as Rayner says, it may be time to investigate living decision makers and not other people's ethnographic accounts. I think that humans prefer not to be dominated unless compensated by significant rewards, such as protection from aggression or economic risk. Thus, the tendency to prefer freedom from control is far from absolute; it has to compete with the rewards that may come from strong individuals and also with a fearful aversion to stirring their ire. But so long as the group can keep individual aggressiveness firmly under control, neither of these competing factors is likely to develop strongly. Although resistance to an unusually assertive person can be dangerous if attempted individually, a small society can readily manage the problem by aggressive manipulative sanctioning or the establishment of social distance. By threatening or practicing such behavior, the main political actors usually keep their leaders in line. Where economic redistribution or protection from exter-

nal predation serves as a major reward, the benefits of strong leadership make submission easier, and once power has been allowed a leader the costs of opposition rise very sharply. I believe that a better understanding of such rewards and punishments will help us to understand the transition to political centralization.

Rayner suggests that in trying so hard to detect intentionality I could have been counting only sources that provided unambiguous evidence of intentional sanctioning and therefore rejected possible negative evidence. What I did was examine any source in which centralized authority and stratification were not very well developed and take as solid evidence only the 48 unambiguous cases of intentional manipulation, setting aside a number of cases that merely exhibited indications of sanctioning and also many cases for which insufficient information was a major problem. Most of the latter were ethnographies that glossed over the leadership role, gave no instances of behavior by leaders, provided no description of the political ethos, and gave no instances of people trying to dominate and being sanctioned or distanced. I did watch for evidence that might falsify the hypotheses being explored. For example, I noted the few cases in which individuals managed to dominate their fellows *without* being sanctioned. Unfortunately, there was no precise information about presence or absence of an egalitarian ethos in those cases, nor do we know how long the domination episodes lasted. Again, these instances, along with reports such as Gayton's (1930) on shamans who intimidated people among the apparently egalitarian Yurok, are of particular interest with respect to political centralization.

My attempt to use reverse dominance hierarchy as a way of placing human behavior in perspective relative to a common African ape ancestor has met with varying degrees of acceptance. Rayner apparently takes reverse dominance hierarchy to be any sanctioning of leaders in any type of society, but this is not what I said. In hierarchical societies keeping a leader in line amounts merely to a reverse-dominance *episode;* when an abusive leader is changed for a strong leader who is not abusive, the hierarchy continues to assume the orthodox pyramid form. A reverse dominance hierarchy is present only when the strongest individuals in a group are denied power by assertive collective action on a continuing basis.

Kent raises the fundamental issue of whether all human groups have leaders, suggesting that in many cases leaders are erroneously perceived either because outside observers accustomed to leaders are seeing them where they are absent or because outsiders have forced individuals to act uncustomarily as leaders. This introduces problems of definition and perhaps reflects the tendency to contrast "government" and "anarchy"; in effect, this forces an easy typological choice as an alternative to exploring the subtleties of low-key leadership. Anthropologists in the field tend to assume that what they see under routine observational circumstances is all there is, but I have suggested that the political behavior of leading individuals can be kept very low-profile by a *primus inter pares* ethos and its inhibiting effects. For example, among foragers people known to be astute in making their personal decisions are likely to be perceived by the group as potential leaders when leadership needs arise (see Riches 1982). Kent places such occasional leaders in quotes, but I find it useful to avoid the sharp distinction.

Obviously, leaders whose usefulness to the group is ephemeral are less likely to abuse power than ones whose roles are formally recognized or continuously exercised, but both types of leadership are associated with an egalitarian ethos. One would expect leadership to be far more prominent and continuous where intergroup conflict is ongoing than where only nonmilitary leadership is needed for the relatively rare ecological or social exigencies that require a group response.

Barclay suggests "anarchic" as a better label than "egalitarian" or "reverse dominance" for societies with no government or true legal sanctions. I believe that every human society at least in times of stress will produce leaders and will exhibit moral sanctioning that helps to organize and *govern* behavior; either would be inconsistent with any notion of "anarchy." There may be some problems of polysemy with this ethnocentric term, insofar as it tends to connote not only an absence of government as we know it but disorder. The application of even the first sense of the term to nonliterate peoples' sociopolitical arrangements seems to me dubious because our own definition of "government" gets in the way of impartial exploration of low-key politics. My point is that the nuanced behaviors reflect not so much an absence of government as a partial suppression of tendencies toward government.

Kent also raises the question whether the egalitarian sanctioning is directed against leadership aspirations or simply against deviant assertive behavior. In my treatment there is no such dilemma. If particular leadership aspirations are indigenously coded as abusive, this is no different from any other individual's being abusively dominant except that in deciding on sanctions the group must include the positive value of the person's leadership in the equation. If an egalitarian ethos is present, abusive leadership is, by definition, deviant.

Kent says that in her experience aggressive-assertive individuals are rarely if ever chosen as leaders. My suggestion is that if such groups are observed long enough, eventually a leader will try for self-aggrandizement. When the group does make a mistake, people similar to the San and the Navajo seem to treat overaggressive leadership like any other problem of power abuse—through manipulative sanctioning or social distancing, as with Geronimo's abandonment by his band. More generally, Kent's point is well taken. As I tried to make clear in the paper, the vigilant nature of egalitarian behavior makes it possible for the main political actors to preempt attempts at self-aggrandizement, and one way of doing this is to avoid choosing certain persons as leaders.

Finally, for Kent there are questions about the roles of women. My feeling is that our own sex role stereo-

types have resulted in some biased ethnographic perceptions of women's political power and influence (a problem I acknowledged in a footnote). Empirically, we are faced with the fact that, reporting biases aside, women are not very often the group leaders where a leadership role is recognized, and although they may be full or partial members of decision councils they are sometimes excluded. The definition of main political actor was designed to account for any of these contingencies without bias toward either sex. The way an assertive woman would fit into my theory is that if she tried to abuse power she would be controlled like any other upstart unless there were some special attitude that resulted in sex-role bias.

There remains the question whether human nature itself might be sexually dimorphic. I said in effect that it is male chimpanzees that seem obsessed by political power, but I would not go so far as to assert that genes make them so (although this seems possible). If there is no definite answer to the question with chimpanzees, it seems unlikely that we can even guess with humans. My assumption in writing the paper was that basically there is one human nature and that wherever women have partial or full participation in political process—as main political actors or as deviants who abuse power or even just as contributors to public opinion—they have a role in egalitarian political process. It is obviously a cultural matter whether women are included among those defined indigenously as peers.

Dentan raises the issue of autonomy and indirectly of psychodynamics as a kind of analysis I neglected to discuss. Mentioned in passing is my failure to cite the recent article on autonomy among foragers by Gardner (1991), with a suggestion that some of my ideas were anticipated in it and in work by Robarchek. With respect to Gardner's parallel effort, my article was basically complete by late 1991, and I had already decided that an "autonomy" approach was not appropriate to my analytical goals. With respect to originality, I should also mention that the arguments presented here have been published in several contexts (Boehm 1982*b*, 1984, 1986*a*, 1991) as evolutionary or political hypotheses directed at foragers and others. More important, Lee's (1979) description of San social control and Woodburn's (1982) very specific hypothesis about African foragers' intentionally keeping their social life egalitarian through sanctioning do not appear in Gardner's list of 12 forager explanations, even though autonomy is prominent in their interpretations. The discussion following Gardner's article does touch on sanctioning at several points but again not as a possible major cause of egalitarian behavior. Had I been writing a book rather than an article, I would have taken Gardner's useful analysis and the lively discussion it engendered into account, and Robarchek's thoughts as well. Here I took an analytical shortcut by bypassing individual psychodynamics and looking for contradictory pan-human propensities (dominance, submission, and dislike of being dominated) that drive psychodynamics and shape social psychology; I concentrated on the egalitarian ethos as a *cultural* locus of values that motivates sanctioning.

Dentan suggests that the analysis here is Hobbesian because there is no element of self-control. I believe that self-control is implicit in the argument but far more difficult to demonstrate by case study than is external control by sanctioning. I made it clear that occasional punishment of overassertive individuals suppresses individual domination tendencies over the long run in the absence of further sanctioning by making "examples" of people, and I would consider this as involving self-control. I also implied that sensitivity to an egalitarian ethos has a similar effect. Beyond this, I think that the psychological variability among group members in the matter of self-control and dominance behavior also figures in the analysis. It is not a war of all against all but a war of the great majority who are willing to settle for equality against the occasional dominator who is not. The assumption would be that such upstarts either lose self-control or imperfectly judge the egalitarian intentions of their peers and think they can get away with it.

Dentan argues that deserting an abusive leader is not in fact dominating behavior. To some extent I agree, and I did go out of my way to differentiate desertion from more manipulative moral sanctioning. One could argue that desertion involves social distancing rather than social manipulation, but the same is true of execution and exile, and these involve decisive moralistic manipulation of a problem situation. In fact, exiling, deserting, or executing an upstart amounts to a very strong case of ostracism, but desertion has the least aura of dominance because the group may slip away in the night rather than confronting the upstart. Indeed, it is suggestive of the avoidance pattern found among foragers, used more often in managing conflicts than the more manipulative conflict resolution found among sedentary peoples. If I seem to be splitting hairs here, it is because it could be argued that avoidance was the only solution to the problem of domination during the Paleolithic and therefore reverse dominance hierarchy was absent even though fearful avoidance facilitated leveling. However, one must consider that the deserted leader would know where to find the group and regain dominance if there were no other obstacle. Empirically, the groups reporting only desertion are about half foragers, but for the three Australian groups, three African forager societies, and Eskimos no desertion is reported.

Barclay points to causes of leveling other than intentional sanctioning such as external disruption of hereditary offices, debts owed by chiefs, and jealousy. To these may be added the various ecological, economic, and social explanations listed, including witchcraft accusations as an expression of jealousy. Similarly, Knauft sees my treatment of such automatic leveling mechanisms as indicating that they and intentional leveling mechanisms are mutually exclusive, but in fact I was concerned that automatic leveling mechanisms were only part of the story. If some combination of these automatic or external leveling factors were so effective that

no individual ever tried to dominate anyone, a group might have no stimulus to develop an egalitarian ethos or egalitarian behavior, and reverse dominance hierarchy might be less widespread than I have suggested. It is conceivable, for example, that envy-based witchcraft accusations sometimes perform the same leveling functions as fully conscious sanctioning (as, for example, with Knauft's Gebusi) and do this so completely that an egalitarian ethos does not arise, but to be certain that an egalitarian ethos is absent may require specialized investigation techniques.

In any event, egalitarian sanctioning as a fully conscious intentional behavior does receive substantial help from a wide variety of automatic leveling mechanisms. It must be kept in mind, however, that there are also material factors that promote hierarchy. For example, when resources permit large populations to live in one place, and particularly if there is a warfare pattern that makes fission unprofitable, groups may not split even when they grow so large that they develop factions that inhibit unanimous egalitarian sanctioning. This makes development of centralized authority much easier in spite of the fact that both intentional leveling mechanisms and automatic ones may be operating in the opposite direction. It is important not to contrive an explanation focused on the immediate functional requirement for analysis, be this egalitarian leveling or the development of hierarchy and state formation. I consider this an important criticism and hope that the integrated analytical framework I have developed here will facilitate a more even-handed approach.

Hill's interesting case study from the Northwest Amazon illustrates nicely how among peasants public opinion can focus on a leader and shame him into relinquishing control in a case of power abuse. Initially I decided to omit societies that were not fully autonomous locally, but with the preliminary analysis completed it makes sense to have a careful look at such complications, for there are many peasant societies that have a very substantial degree of local autonomy including a free hand in choosing (and controlling) their own leaders and a large responsibility for policing their own behavior. The cases cited by Hill are highly informative and, I think, lend credence to the notion that the model I propose could help explain both pristine and secondary political centralization.

While Hill seeks to broaden the definition of egalitarian behavior, Barclay questions the inclusion of certain nonpeasant societies. Bedouins do present problems as part-societies, but often their local autonomy is sufficient to meet my survey criteria. The refuge-area Montenegrins, like the Berbers, retain full local autonomy much of the time even though they have had to cope with external predators and have submitted expediently by paying tribute when necessary. In any event, I agree with Hill that the definition of egalitarian behavior could now be broadened to include peasants who choose their leaders and do their own sanctioning and also modern societies that do more than pay lip service to egalitarian principles. However, these are not reverse dominance hierarchies as I have defined them.

As indicated above, I agree with Knauft that the presence of intentional leveling by no means rules out socioecological contributions to leveling. I stressed intentionality because the socioecological arguments, while often plausible, seemed contrived and because the forces cited were so variegated as to preclude any general explanation. Although some commentators seem concerned about my placing my general explanation in an evolutionary perspective, Knauft would like me to explain what it is about human culture that allows rule-governed and morally encoded social control to develop among individuals who are only distantly related, calling for analytical treatment of coevolution and long-term historical change in an ecological context. These questions are very interesting, and I agree with Knauft that if better bridges can be built between evolutionary and other perspectives in anthropology the discipline will profit. Obviously the human capacity for cooperation is intrinsic to the kind of consensual sanctioning that I am discussing. Whether every instance of cooperation must be supported by an inclusive-fitness argument requires careful consideration. In theory, if an individual's ability to cooperate were solely the result of gene selection that favored individual ability to share large-game meat, I see no reason that other forms of cooperation could not have been flexibly invented as spin-offs, as it were, and continued through purely cultural selection without individual genetic benefit so long as they did not reduce inclusive fitness (see Wilson 1989, Boehm 1981). In fact, however, moral sanctioning as a special kind of cooperative behavior would appear to provide reproductive advantages to group members in competition with the deviant. When greedy individuals or cheaters or recidivist killers within the group are curbed, the rest of the group's members increase their fitness by denying to a would-be upstart special advantages such as multiple wives, a lion's share of subsistence, or a longer life span. If this analysis makes sense, then the individual capacity for cooperative egalitarian behavior benefits reproductive success. But to avoid contrivance, it is necessary to say also that the propensity for individually competitive self-assertion also would appear to provide fitness rewards up to point that a would-be dominator begins to receive sanctions that curtail reproduction. As far as genetic selection is concerned, then, in theory reverse dominance hierarchies could go on forever as long as the two propensities remained in balance. Obviously, it is to environmental and cultural factors that we must look if we are to explain the return to orthodox dominance hierarchies and state formation.

One issue that I must address further in conclusion is whether egalitarian behavior and reverse dominance hierarchy may apply to most or all small-scale societies that lack very marked hierarchies. The survey data do not permit a definitive answer. My considered assessment is that probably every human society that exhibits an egalitarian ethos has developed a repertoire of coping

mechanisms ranging from grumbling and direct criticism to ostracism, deposition, desertion, and often execution, all for a single purpose. However, given the flexibility of human nature and the wide variety of world environmental and historical particulars, it would not be surprising if the egalitarian ethos were absent in a number of small societies, any more than that the ethnographically adequate reports considered here include several instances of strong individuals' dominating their groups without being sanctioned. Thus, even though I have employed the notion of "universal" in proposing a general theory, I would happily settle for "widespread." This would change none of the arguments, but it would leave open the possibility that in the Paleolithic both orthodox and reverse dominance hierarchies existed.

What is important is that we recognize the forces that make egalitarian behavior so widespread. This phenomenon of people's shaping their political life in accordance with a dislike of being dominated seems to occur wherever there is an egalitarian ethos and a capacity for consensus and the application of collective pressure to deviants. Ecological conditions may promote either leveling or growth of hierarchy and must be evaluated in each instance comprehensively and without bias or unwitting contrivance.

The analytical habits of anthropologists have long favored explanations that take cultural and ecological variables to be self-organizing, and I consider this a serious drawback even though such models have obviously been very useful. Indeed, I have invested substantial effort in analyzing this particular problem of political process precisely because it provides a test case for the argument that the intentions of nonliterate actors may be an overriding independent variable. If my interpretations of egalitarian sanctioning are correct, there is an extremely close relation between the "intentionalism" of my arguments and the intentional, politically insightful, and realistically effective behavior of foragers and others who have been documented to safeguard this autonomy by sanctioning upstarts. I consider this one of the main points of my paper, and it is one that seems in the main to have been accepted, particularly by Dupré.

Whether reverse dominance hierarchy is an apt characterization for the social product of egalitarian behavior remains to be seen, since its applicability to hypotheses about human prehistory depends partly on how one interprets the low-key political behavior of certain foragers. It may be difficult for scholars who think in terms of a binary contrast between "government" and "anarchy" to sort this out; indeed, impartial field research aimed at looking at subtler aspects of leadership personalities and styles, such as Lee (1982) has pioneered, and investigations of the specific political histories of groups through direct recall and oral tradition may be the only way to assess the long-term political dynamics of such groups. But as a starting point we have the fact that an egalitarian ethos is reported for a large number of extant foragers. Where such an ethos is reported, a reverse dominance hierarchy is also likely to exist and to have existed among their precursors.

What about future research? Foragers in general are of particular interest to the hypothesis that, prehistorically, orthodox dominance hierarchy was replaced for a time by reverse dominance hierarchy. Using published reports alone, I have shown that foragers consciously control their political situations in a variety of ways. Ideally there will be additional data and reinterpretation of existing data in this area. Following Rayner's suggestion, I sincerely hope that this discussion will stimulate scholars who still have the opportunity to study locally autonomous foragers to examine the presence or absence of an egalitarian ethos, leadership roles, personality types of leaders, and the sanctioning of upstarts and of upstart leaders in particular. Social control by witchcraft also deserves further investigation or reinterpretation from this point of view, although this could be difficult.

With respect to the development of political centralization and state origins, I believe that the analysis is applicable largely without further research; conflict theories have looked to class conflict and conflict among factions but not to the widespread tension I have documented between the rank and file and overassertive individuals. This tension arises at least episodically in virtually every type of locally autonomous small-scale society, including some that exhibit rank differences or ephemeral authoritative leadership. If the fundamental tension I have proposed is accepted as existing empirically, then new hypotheses about the earlier phases of political centralization can be explored. These must account specifically for the way in which the egalitarian ethos and the sanctioning behavior it engenders are defeated, atrophy, are co-opted, or are otherwise displaced. A better-focused investigation of this tension in big-man societies, incipient chiefdoms, and secondary state formation episodes might also be useful.

The diversity of responses reflects the diversity of arguments I have used in making the case for egalitarian behavior as a useful cross-cultural category that has implications for understanding both phylogeny and the intentional aspect of culture process. My intention was to raise some new questions about a core anthropological concept that was undergoing increasing paradigmatic stress and to seek acceptance for a general hypothesis that took into account the political designs of nonliterate actors. I hope that this debate will serve as a beginning and not an end.

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